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WE BELIEVE LIBRARIANSHIP CAN FIND MORE DURABLE FOUNDATIONS FOR REALIZING THE CONJOINED GOALS OF INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM AND SOCIAL JUSTICE"

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Conversations around Social Justice and Intellectual Freedom

Author _ **Sohpia Sotilleo** (ssotilleo@gmail.com), Vice-President, Freedom to Read Foundation, and Dean of the Library, Thurgood Marshall Library, Bowie State University.

During the summer of 2022, the Freedom to Read Foundation (ftrf.org) hosted a successful and groundbreaking virtual symposium. “Where Intellectual Freedom and Social Justice Meet: A Call to Action” focused on topics around the intersection of social justice and intellectual freedom. The board invited educators, authors, journalists, publishers, First Amendment advocates, and all areas of librarians to come together and share their thoughts and ideas. The board also invited them to think about action plans, steps, and tools that could be taken from the symposium to move the discussion beyond the walls and place of thoughts regarding the current challenges.

In this issue we share commentaries and featured articles to continue that conversation and to forge a deeper understanding of how social justice and intellectual freedom may, or may not, support and enhance one another as we continue to navigate challenges to intellectual freedom and see the need for social justice. There are commentaries that speak on topics from the classroom to boycotts, and featured articles that speak on the multidimensional role of the library and economic emphasis as well as thoughts around social justice and intellectual freedom.

As we read the submissions, let’s seek to explore our own knowledge of:

- How do we foster a stronger understanding about the ways intellectual freedom supports social justice?
- How do intellectual freedom and social justice support one another, and how do we utilize both to mitigate harm to marginalized groups?
- How do society’s intellectual freedom and social justice stakeholders work together to promote underrepresented voices on this topic?

I don’t believe this discussion can be exhausted. We continue to see and hear about challenges that appear in new places and in different ways, and as we continue to explore this topic, I am thankful for the spaces we create to hear thoughts and develop action plans.

Sohpia Sotilleo
Vice-President
Freedom to Read Foundation
Special Issue Editor



The Right to Boycott

Author _ Al Kagan (akagan@illinois.edu) African Studies Bibliographer and Professor of Library Administration Emeritus at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and long-time member of the ALA Social Responsibilities Round Table.

I am pleased to submit this commentary for the special issue on the intersection of social justice and intellectual freedom. The ALA Social Responsibilities Round Table (SRRT) has been working for several years on an issue that perfectly exemplifies the intersection of social justice and intellectual freedom: the right to engage in political boycotts.

At the ALA Annual Conference on June 26, 2022, SRRT sponsored a program titled “Libraries, Free Speech, and Anti-Boycott Laws,” featuring Luna Martinez, from the Center for Constitutional Rights; Alan Leveritt, publisher of the *Arkansas Times*, which is challenging Arkansas’s anti-boycott law; and a message from Brian Hauss, the chief litigator from the ACLU on behalf of the *Arkansas Times*. This case is on its way to the US Supreme Court. We also introduced a “Resolution in Defense of the Right to Engage in Political Boycotts” (2021–2022 ALA CD#55). SRRT is trying to work with the ALA intellectual freedom bodies, and we are happy to report that our resolution was endorsed by the Intellectual Freedom Round Table and an amended version of our resolution easily passed the ALA Membership Meeting. However, it was defeated at the ALA Council by a vote of 51 yes, 83 no, and 9 abstentions.

As most of us may already know, there is currently a coordinated right-wing assault on free speech directed specifically against progressive ideas and movements for social justice. This assault includes efforts to ban books and gag teachers from instructing about “divisive subjects” around race and gender (language from New Hampshire’s law), an unprecedented number of laws restricting the right to demonstrate, and laws that prohibit whistleblowers from exposing the horrendous abuse of animals in industrial agriculture. It also includes legislation designed to punish

individuals, organizations, and companies that engage in boycotts for political or social change. These include boycotts of Israel and now also boycotts of fossil fuels and arms manufacturing corporations.

Much of the restrictive legislation has been drafted and aggressively promoted by the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), an ultra-conservative, evangelical Christian, corporatist lobbying group heavily funded by Koch Industries, among others. In the past, ALEC has inspired bills promoting “stand your ground” legislation, targeting protests against oil pipelines, restricting the right to abortion and the rights of transgender students, and requiring voter IDs. It has also been a leading proponent of “anti-BDS legislation” that addresses the Palestinian movement for social justice, and the more recent copycat bills to restrict the right to boycott fossil fuels and firearms manufacturers.

In a March 21, 2022, broadcast, National Public Radio quoted Isaac Kamola, co-author of *Free Speech and Koch Money*, about the campaign by Donors Trust and Donors Capital Fund to finance rightwing think tanks like the Manhattan Institute and Goldwater Institute to campaign against a purposely misconstrued concept of critical race theory. The group, No Left Turn in Education, is also offering model legislation. Ralph Wilson, the other co-author of the above book, stated that these funders and think tanks see



free inquiry as “a threat to the future of capitalism and free enterprise.”

The SRRT program and resolution addressed legislation that punishes political boycotts. Boycotts have been crucial to the struggle for social justice since the founding of the United States. The Boston Tea Party in 1773 signaled the beginning of the revolt of the American colonists against the British Government. They dumped 342 chests of tea into the harbor to protest the British tea tax. We all know of Rosa Parks, a hero of the Civil Rights Movement, who initiated the successful 1955 boycott on behalf of the NAACP against the segregated bus system in Montgomery, Alabama, until bus segregation was ended by a court decision in 1956. We may remember the successful 1965–1970 boycott against California grapes initiated by Cesar Chavez of the United Farmworkers to unionize the corporate farm fields. This author spent many years organizing in an international boycott against apartheid South Africa until a new majority-rule government was finally achieved in 1994.

It is no surprise that the anti-boycott legislation listed above has been opposed by nearly every major group in the US concerned with free speech and intellectual freedom. These organizations include the ACLU, the Center for Constitutional Rights, the National Coalition Against Censorship, Defending Rights and Dissent, the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression (FIRE), the National Lawyers Guild, and the American Association of University Professors. Furthermore, five federal courts in four states have

already found anti-boycott laws unconstitutional because they violate the First Amendment.

However, one leading advocate of free speech is missing from this list—the American Library Association. This is especially surprising since this is also clearly a library issue. SRRT has documented more than 170 requests for proposal (RFPs) and contracts for library projects that have forced contractors to sign a pledge not to boycott Israel (<https://www.ala.org/rt/srrt/irtf/anti-bds-legislation-library-connection>). Additionally, we have already found a few library-related RFPs and contracts that contain state-mandated pledges not to boycott firearms and fossil fuels corporations. We can expect many more in the coming months. And, since there is now a template for such bills, we can expect similar library-related RFPs and contracts on a host of other topics in the future—that is, unless we organize to stop these campaigns.

In the recent SRRT program on this subject, Luna Martinez stated that there are now more than 200 anti-boycott bills, and 34 states have adopted legislation. Martinez ended her talk with a call for huge public support to oppose such legislation on behalf of free speech. SRRT agrees with Martinez’s call. One way to build such support is to motivate all kinds of organizations to take a stand. We need the ALA Council to make a clear statement on this issue. Beyond that, ALA could consider lobbying vigorously in state capitals and Congress to uphold the right to boycott. Such a response would provide a perfect example of how ALA can stand up for both social justice and libraries by simply taking a position on an important free-speech issue.



Playing it Safe in the Classroom

How Avoiding Controversy Norms the White Conservative Experience

Author _ **Ronnie K. Stephens** (ronniekstephens@gmail.com), Instructor at Tarrant County College, Assistant Professor at the University of Texas at Arlington.

Controversial as it may be, I entered education through Teach for America (TFA), an organization that purports to place new teachers in regions that struggle with literacy, retention, and poverty. There are many very harsh and warranted criticisms of the program, particularly related to their perpetuation of a white-savior mentality and the appeal to ambitious graduates looking to boost their resumes with a bit of social justice work before moving on to prestigious careers in public policy, politics, and law. I begin here not because I want to shape perspectives on TFA, but to contextualize how TFA has shaped me and, more specifically, my approach to curricula. I applied to the program several years after leaving university, motivated both by my passion for education and by my desire to help dismantle systemic oppression in America. I wanted to work for and with students who were disenfranchised, silenced, and otherwise ignored, but let's be clear: I did not want to save my students; I wanted to celebrate them.

One obvious way to do that, I assumed, would be to diversify the curriculum so they could experience stories that mirrored their own lives, read about characters who looked like them and sounded like them, and engage in discussions about conflicts relevant to their respective communities. Because I was initially placed in a school on the cusp of state intervention, my earliest administrators were indifferent to my choice of reading selections. In fact, the first two principals I worked for explicitly told me not to ask them for permission before

teaching things I felt the students would respond to; rather, they would come to me only if the materials became an issue. They had already learned that few parents in our community would even pay attention to what their children were reading, and fewer still would bother to object. In those first few years, I operated with complete freedom, never worrying that my reading selections would disrupt perspectives or challenge ideologies. To me, that was and is the point of literature. Even now, I begin every semester by telling my students they will be



uncomfortable with some of our readings, and that I view discomfort as requisite to learning.

As circumstances dictated, I left my first post after four years and moved to Texas, where I began teaching for a very successful, if incredibly affluent and conservative, school district outside Fort Worth. I was immediately confronted with an entirely new, but pervasive, mentality: *Don't teach anything that might upset the parents*. This practice has followed me from position to position, including my most recent assignment as a dual-credit professor for a local community college. I have come to learn that this is code for: *Teach to conservative White America*. This semester, I have engaged in conversations with colleagues in higher education, as well as fellow book reviewers, about several new books and their applicability in the classroom. Despite starred reviews and award nominations, I continue to encounter resistance to titles like *How We Fight for Our Lives*, *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous*, and *Who Put This Song On?* on the basis that they will disrupt or displease our conservative community.

This practice of centering conservative perspectives is alarming and problematic, as it ultimately normalizes a singular American experience and alienates voices that are already marginalized in every aspect of our society. More importantly, these decisions fail our community, rendering educators tacitly complicit in the marginalization of underrepresented voices. This is most clear in the decisions made surrounding the suitability of books involving sexual encounters. As author Saeed Jones observes, "In my career, I've learned that any depiction of queer desire will be regarded by many straight/closeted people as more lurid or provocative than it actually is. Take that same scene, change the pronouns to make it a straight couple and it will barely even earn comment" (Jones 2020). This resonates heavily for me this semester, as it perfectly summarizes a conversation I had with my department chair when discussing a new novel I hoped to include in my Composition II courses.

I approached my department chair shortly after Ocean Vuong was awarded a MacArthur Genius Grant last year with the idea of swapping *Beartown*, by Fredrik Backman, for Vuong's debut novel, *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous*. In the interest of full disclosure, I informed him that my primary concern, and the reason for my approaching him, was that Vuong's novel included a scene in which the main character has sex with his love interest. The scene is fairly graphic, but the sex depicted is remarkably tender and, perhaps more notably, consensual. As expected, my department chair had instant reservations, and he advised that I not teach it in my dual-credit classes for fear of backlash. One of the things he said ultimately prompted discussions with my colleagues and prompted this paper: *I don't like that I'm advising you against*

teaching this book, and I don't think it's right, but I do think it's risky to teach it in a dual-credit classroom given our student population. I appreciate many things about my current teaching position, and his candor in that moment made the decision a bit easier to respect.

It bears noting that I had intentionally waited until Vuong's novel gained significant acclaim, hoping that the success of the book would bolster my case for its inclusion. The novel was longlisted for the 2019 National Book Award for Fiction, the Carnegie Medal in Fiction, the 2019 Aspen Words Literacy Prize, and the PEN/Hemingway Debut Novel Award; it was Shortlisted for the 2019 Center for Fiction First Novel Prize and won the New England Book Award for Fiction. And, of course, the author was awarded one of the most prestigious prizes in literature following the novel's publication. The fact that I believed such a résumé was necessary before even *asking* to include the book in my classes is indicative of a culture that routinely suppresses marginalized experiences in literature selections. I had no such worry when I asked to teach *Beartown*, which is a wonderful novel, but one that involves frequent uses of profanity, a graphic rape scene, and disturbing homophobic proclamations. I've taught long enough to know administrators and parents can overlook certain "controversial" elements, and object immediately to others.

Any educator who has spent time as a secondary English teacher will be familiar with *Lord of the Flies*, a book that is not just frequently taught but often required by school districts. I was asked to teach it in both Oklahoma schools and Texas schools. When I objected, after three consecutive years of discomfort requiring students to read the novel, I was alienated by my fellow English colleagues. My department chair supported me, but others in the department believed I was being too sensitive and pushing a liberal agenda by objecting to the book. My reservations were, among other things, about the infamous slaughter of the sow:

The afternoon wore on, haze and dreadful with damp heat; the sow staggered her way ahead of them, bleeding and mad, and the hunters followed, wedded to her in lust, excited by the long chase and the dropped blood.

...

Roger found a lodgement for his point and began to push till he was leaning with his whole weight. The spear moved forward inch by inch, and the terrified squealing became a high-pitched scream.

...

Roger began to withdraw his spear and noticed it for the first time. Robert stabilized the thing in a phrase that was received uproariously.

"Right up her ass!" (Golding 134–36)



Here readers encounter a group of boys in the early stages of adolescence indulging in forcibly sodomizing a live animal. They are bloodthirsty and violent. The author tells us explicitly that they enjoy the pain they are inflicting. Some will inherently argue that this is a very brief and important scene in an otherwise classic novel. We have been teaching *Lord of the Flies* for years, and neither parents nor educators object to any significant degree.

Ironically, this scene is precisely the reason I believed that my department chair would approve *Beartown*, despite a homophobic tirade by one teenage boy and a violent rape by another. “Collect the pucks! Defend the fortress! Don’t get fucked up the ass! No ass fucking on my ice,” a boy shouts in a rant that spans two full pages. He is angry with his hockey coach, angry with the expectations of masculinity imposed on him by the town and by his parents. Note how similar the language is to that of the boys killing their prey in *Lord of the Flies*. Critically speaking, both scenes are relevant to their respective narratives, and both serve to develop key themes. Neither is included simply to shock the reader. Where one implies that sodomizing another living thing is a display of power and control, the other reinforces that being sodomized is a display of weakness and degradation. Both are highly problematic in their characterization of a sexual act most commonly, if wrongly, associated with gay men, but neither is inflammatory or controversial enough to warrant removing the books from the classroom.

In contrast, *On Earth We’re Briefly Gorgeous* was ruled out by my department chair for including a scene depicting the exact same sexual act described in the above examples. While Golding and Backman include these scenes to comment on masculinity and power dynamics, Vuong includes a pivotal moment in which the protagonist accepts his sexuality and chooses to act on a desire he has been wrestling with for much of the novel. The decision is not made lightly, and the two boys approach the moment with all the seriousness and affection we might expect from any two characters who decide to lose their virginity to one another. After considering it for months, practicing various positions and grappling with the implications of being a top or a bottom, of whether or not their desire meant they were “faggots,” Trevor whispers to the protagonist:

“I’ll go slow, okay?” His mouth a gash of youth. “I’ll be easy.”

I turned—tentative, thrilled—toward the dirt floor, planted my forehead on my arm, and waited.

...

When he pushed I felt myself scream—but didn’t. Instead, my mouth was full of salted skin, then the bone underneath as

I bit down on my arm. Trevor stopped, not yet all the way in, sat up, and asked if I was okay. (Vuong 2019, 201)

The scene progresses softly and honestly, with both boys feeling vulnerable, scared, exposed. Each reassures the other, and Trevor continues to check in with the protagonist to make sure that it is okay for them to continue. It is a perfect illustration of consent culture, a scene which says as much about masculinity as either Golding or Backman, and yet a scene that automatically disqualifies the novel from being taught in a high school classroom, dual-credit or otherwise.

Given the conversation with my department chair about *On Earth We’re Briefly Gorgeous*, I knew better than to ask about another remarkable book published last year, *How We Fight for Our Lives*, by Saeed Jones. The memoir is unflinching in its investigation of identity, taking the reader through an often traumatic and self-destructive coming-of-age story that considers the ramifications of being black and gay. As Jones walks the halls of his high school four years after the murders of James Byrd Jr. and Matthew Shepard, he has an important realization that sets the tone for the rest of the book:

By the time Matthew Shepard’s life and death made it to the classrooms of my high school in 2002, my feelings about him and James Byrd Jr. had started to swirl and converge. I was walking through a dusty, florescent-lit hallway—halfway to the assembly hall, trying with every filament of my body to look cool—when the two truths finally collided:

Being *black* can get you killed. Being *gay* can get you killed.

Being a black gay boy is a death wish.

And one day, if you’re lucky, your life and death will become some artist’s new “project.” (Jones 2019, 44)

Jones, as a teenager in 2002, is aware that any eventual tragedy he befalls will be tokenized and fetishized, but never truly honored or addressed, something that is equally true when he published *How We Fight for Our Lives* in 2019. This remains a vital and frequent conversation among marginalized communities, and the importance of that conversation in contemporary American society is evidenced by the fact that Jones’ memoir was awarded both the 2019 Kirkus Prize for Nonfiction and the 2020 Stonewall Book Award-Isreal Fishman Nonfiction Award.

Throughout the memoir, Jones is forced to come to terms with the fact that both society as a whole and, more specifically, his loved ones do not accept him as he is. The narrative is painful and difficult, but it also moves toward hope with astonishing grace. In one particularly difficult scene, Jones confronts how he is fetishized by closeted gay men because of



his blackness. He and another man have just begun to have sex when the man, who is white, shouts, “Come on! . . . Fuck me with that big black dick!” (Jones 2019, 105). It is Jones’ reflection, both in the moment and afterward, that makes this such a pivotal moment in the book:

That sentence had been in his head since he first saw my profile online. The words flickered when he first opened his door to me, flickered again when I spread my legs on his couch, again when my ripped shirt fell to his bedroom floor. In that blue-lit bedroom, my black dick was all I was.

...

As I write, I want to pull myself out of him and out of that room. . . . However many masks we invent and deploy, in the end, we cannot control what other people see when they look at us. (107)

In the pages that follow, Jones comments on the frequency with which he is reduced, objectified, and dehumanized on the basis of his blackness, his queerness, or both. For teenagers coming to terms with their own intersectional identities, the importance of representation and visibility like that in Jones’ memoir is indispensable. Yet I knew not to ask because Jones is a black gay man, and the simple act of including his memoir in my syllabus is viewed not just as a political statement, but also a controversial and inflammatory choice.

Despite increasing attention to intersectionality and identity politics, despite the ever-visible conversations around the dangers of heteronormativity, despite the widespread knowledge that suicide is the leading cause of death for adolescents as young as ten years old, I have internalized that Jones’ memoir cannot be included on my syllabus because it addresses race and sexuality explicitly. And if we are to pretend that race is not a factor, consider Morgan Parker’s debut novel, *Who Put This Song On?*, released in 2019. Like Jones’ memoir, it includes an explicit scene in which the protagonist, a young woman, is nearly raped by a White boy from her school. Like Jones, the protagonist in Parker’s novel is forced to confront what it means to be fetishized for being black. Though the initial encounter is consensual, the mood changes when the boy remarks, “I’ve seriously always wanted to do a black chick” (Parker 2019, 196). The narrator is initially stunned into silence before laughing nervously. As the scene continues, Morgan begins to resist as the boy becomes increasingly hostile.

“Let me see that black pussy.”

I wriggle underneath him and start to sit up. “Wait, what?”

Running my fingers through my hair, the ecstasy lifts. “No. No, this isn’t what I want.” I pull my sweatshirt down and wipe the slobber from my face.

“Aw, come on,” he whines, sliding his hands between my legs, and he isn’t gentle at all. “You little slut,” he cackles menacingly. “God, I wanna fuck you so hard.” It’s like he’s reciting phrases from a script.

Morgan is able to open the door to the truck and escape the situation, but she is filled with fear as the boy revs his engine and speeds by, yelling “Black bitch” as he passes. Though she decides not to report the incident or tell her friends, the agency in this scene is clear.

This exchange is embedded in a larger narrative about blackness as the protagonist, Morgan, navigates a predominantly white community and school that views her as “not really black.” Both White and Black characters, ranging from close friends to a potential love interest to her teacher, question her blackness for a variety of reasons. It is this scene, though, that highlights for Morgan that her skin color is innately tied to others’ perspectives of her. Morgan responds to the situation with incredible strength and resolve, asserting her ownership over her body and refusing to be fetishized in such a way, yet I knew immediately this scene would be too “controversial” for my dual-credit students. While some may argue the scenes in Jones’ memoir and Parker’s novel are not problematic on the basis of race, consider this encounter from *Beartown*, the novel I was approved to teach:

She feels the weight of his body on top of hers and she laughs. . . . But when he forces her jeans down she stops him. He seems to think it’s a game, so she catches his hand and holds it tight.

“I don’t want to, not tonight. I’ve nev . . .” she whispers. “Of course you want to,” he insists.

She flares up.

“Are you deaf or what? I said no!”

His grip on her wrists tightens, first almost imperceptibly, then to the point where it hurts.

...

He doesn’t let go. His eyes just turn black. . . . When she tries to stop his hand he closes his other fist tightly around her throat like a vise, and when she tries to scream his fingers are covering her lips. Lack of oxygen makes her slip in and out of consciousness, and in the midst of everything she will remember peculiar details that no one asks about: a button coming off her blouse when he tears it open . . . (Backman 2017, 176)



This scene ends only when another boy enters the room, distracting the rapist long enough for the girl to break free. For the duration of the novel, the girl, who is fifteen, faces violent backlash for reporting the assault. She is physically abused, alienated by her peers, and even considers suicide in the days following the attack. That this scene does not eliminate *Beartown*, and in fact is pointed to as an example of the importance of the book, clearly illustrates how codified the word “controversial” is in our education system. While *Who Put This Song On?* features a Black female protagonist with agency, one who attends therapy and works to manage her mental illness, the inclusion of a violent sexual encounter between a White boy and a Black girl is enough to eliminate the novel from most classrooms. In contrast, *Beartown*, a wonderful novel in its own right, is acceptable despite homophobic and racist language, a violent rape scene, and significantly more profane language. The key distinction here is that *Beartown* maintains the fragile White woman trope, and its relationships do not cross racial or economic boundaries. Put another way, *Beartown* centers Whiteness and traditional femininity, while *Who Put This Song On?* centers Blackness and female agency.

Every one of these novels includes numerous teaching moments, and all are recognized by critics as well-written, important stories. Yet those by White men, centering White characters and reinforcing heteronormativity, are considered “safe” options in the classroom while those by people of color are dismissed unanimously because they address race and homosexuality.

Whether intentional or not, the decision to “play it safe” in the classroom has resounding effects on our students, on our communities, and on America as a whole. As educators,

we are reinforcing the belief that conversations about race and sexuality are inflammatory. Those of us who do choose to address these issues—as well as we can under the watchful eyes of conservative parents—are continually at risk of reprimand and even termination.

Every semester, my evaluations are filled with comments from students who believe it inappropriate that our readings openly discuss race, sexuality, gender, and rape culture. Just last semester, one student lamented that my choice of readings had caused many uncomfortable conversations with their mother because their beliefs directly contradicted what they were reading, and another remarked that I should not facilitate conversations about communities to which I do not belong or about issues that do not affect me directly. These comments highlight the expectation among students that we will protect their comfort at all costs. What concerns me is not just that supposedly conservative communities are comfortable with triggering depictions of homophobia and rape, but that the mere inclusion of narratives that center experiences outside the White conservative experience are instantly viewed not as legitimate and authentic representations of America, but as intentional, politically charged decisions. The dangers of perpetuating this mentality are clear and well-documented. It is time we, who have taken up the charge of improving our students’ minds and inspiring critical inquiry, acknowledge that playing it safe in the classroom has nothing to do with the safety of our students and everything to do with the security of our jobs. We are, like it or not, weighing the mental and emotional health of our students against our own self-interest every time we make a curriculum choice motivated solely, and explicitly, to appease White conservative parents.

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The Libraries of Llano County, Texas

The End of Civility, Legality, the Rights of the Young to Learn and Mature, and the Public Itself

Author _ Harvey J. Graff (graff.40@osu.edu), Professor Emeritus of English and History and Ohio Eminent Scholar in Literacy Studies at Ohio State University.

Historically, Texas often claims its greatness by size. Over several centuries, that has been a mixed bag. But the state's radical political shift to the right threatens whatever is good in that legacy. In small but extreme right wing–dominated counties like Llano (eighty miles northwest of Austin in the Hill Country), when it comes to basic public facilities like libraries, the presence of books on the shelves, full access to both print and online materials, and professional staffing are under attack. The censorship and stripping of resources underway flouts the civil and legal rights of tax-paying residents, especially young readers. Constituting an illegal right-wing takeover of a public good, actions undermining the public library services in the county are an active danger to the local and the larger community.

With the extralegal interference of the county judge (Ron Cunningham), an ideological extreme, self-appointed minority wrecks a revolution in this small community. It may be summarized under the heading of unconstitutional *censorship* and illegitimate *political takeover*, with a focus on children and adolescents in particular and the larger community more generally. Not only do they usurp state and national legal powers exceeding the scope of their authority, they also violate the rights of the young, rights for which Americans fought for more than a century, including the right to mature socially, culturally, intellectually,

and psychologically. Attempting to obstruct young peoples' growth endangers the future of their communities and American democracy.

Today's censors, or in the popular vernacular, *book banners*, are unprecedented. For more than a millennium, all major campaigns against specific texts involved reading the texts that critics sought to restrict. They did not focus on materials for particular age groups. And they did not single out authors or main characters who are female, racial and ethnic minorities, or differently gendered and abled.



Today's book banners are radically different. They are "the new illiterates." They fear the world around them, including their own young and certainly all "others." Not only do they wish to ban books and reading, they want to ban everything else with which they disagree, from the right of young people to grow up and think for themselves to masks, suicide prevention, basic health education, social and emotional learning resources in schools, constitutionally guaranteed free speech, abortion, gun safety, voting rights, transgender rights, and much more.

Strikingly, the Llano County citizens standing tall in protest and resistance are based in the inclusive community Friends of the Llano County Library Foundation. This is not a caucus of liberals or progressives, but a unifying community core, galvanized into action by the illegitimate actions of the self-appointed radical Right.

Not surprisingly, the radicals' ignorance of law and procedures, mutual respect, and common decency, leaves an expansive paper highway rather than a secretive trail. Available through **Texas Public Information Act** requests, their communications are marked by contradictory collisions of conspiratorial, self-appointed power grabbing in ignorance of laws and procedures, and a devaluing of the contents of the books and online access services they demand to censure and ban. Ranking high among these matters is ignorance of the First Amendment and the Doctrine of the Separation of Powers of state and religion, and a lack of respect for law and tradition; and disregard for due process, democracy, and fellow humans. Their unabashed and unashamed emails are at once extraordinary *and* self-incriminating.

The right-wing coup proceeded in steps beginning in fall 2021 (the year that book banning erupted with Texas in the driver's seat) with complaints by Bonnie Wallace and Rochelle Wells to Library Director Amber Milum about one well-known children's book, *I Need a New Butt*, that was *never even on the library shelves*. Milum expected more complaints and preemptively informed interfering County Commissioner Jerry Don Moss that other often-targeted titles were also absent from shelves. Leila Green Little, a third-generation county resident, mother of two young children, active library patron, and member of the Friends of the Llano Library warned the County Commissioners against censorship in early November.

Little followed her November oral presentation with a formal letter in mid-December. Her major concern was external pressure on the library to end its subscription to the national top-ranked Overdrive platform for accessing materials beyond the library's own contents. The radical Right campaigned to replace it with far more limited, less flexible, more expensive, but more controllable Biblionix. In a companion oral presentation, she remarked that four books had been removed without following the library's own written procedures, an action that reflects the frequent and alarming pattern elsewhere, but often reversed on challenge.

In the New Year, the commissioners, led by Judge Ron Cunningham, and the self-appointed autocrats forced a temporary closing of the library's three branches to "weed out" supposedly objectionable books in violation of established formal procedures. No regard or respect was paid to the tax-payers and those who depend on the library. Cunningham asserted that his group's whims superseded both the professional librarians and library users. The radical revolution was completed with removal of the sitting board and their replacement with a new hand-picked board with greater authority, all with no regard to law, authority, or precedent.

Milum voiced her fears about purchasing any new book, while the radical Right and the lead commissioner acted out over the spelling of "god" with a lower-case "g" on a poster. One of the takeover's leaders, Bonnie Wallace, in a February 3, 2022, email about the new board, challenged policy, practice, and democratic norms: "We are confused on whether we are required to operate under the Open Meetings Act. If we are, then verbiage needs to be added everywhere required to include info about posting, etc." They communicated with county leaders via private email accounts and arranged private meetings. Inappropriate religious references fill public communications.

The final step came in early March when a full-time professional librarian was terminated with no notice for "insubordination": "Your negative behavior was insubordinate and disruptive." No details accompanied the formal notice. The act of following her job description and serving her community "disrupted" the dismantling of the library, putting a target on her back.

That is where things stand. There is no longer a "public" or a "library" in Llano County. How will the Revolution of 2021–2022 end?



The Role of Multidimensional Library Neutrality in Advancing Social Justice

Adapting Theoretical Foundations from Political Science and Urban Planning

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There is an ongoing, polarizing debate in the library profession and scholarship regarding the perceived incompatibility between library neutrality (embedded in the profession through the American Library Association's Library Bill of Rights) and social justice goals. This article asserts that the growing antipathy on the part of some library practitioners and scholars toward neutrality and intellectual freedom is owed at least in part to the profession and scholarship having never articulated an adequate definition of what is meant by neutrality. As a result, the profession lacks a theoretical framework situating the library and library staff as political actors within a multicultural and largely urban society. We argue that such a framework may be drawn from the literatures of political science and urban planning. By positioning libraries and library workers within the context of liberal-democratic institutions—as is the case for urban planners in their theoretical literature—LIS theory can find more durable foundations for its core values. Stressing planning's commitments to the participation of multiple publics, to dialogue, to mediation, and to consensus-building through liberal institutions, we develop a multidimensional understanding of neutrality premised on values, stakeholders, processes, and goals that we then apply to these planning modes. Finally, we propose a model of Communicative Librarianship as best exemplifying these four dimensions of neutrality and their attendant democratic commitments.



The library profession and library and information studies (LIS) scholarship have become increasingly polarized over a long-standing debate concerning the perceived incompatibility between, on one hand, library neutrality and intellectual freedom and, on the other hand, concerns for social justice (Knox 2020; Schrader 2020). Professional discourse has focused on the desirability or ethics of excluding “hateful” speakers from libraries (ACRL 2020; Litwin 2018). Some library practitioners and LIS scholars alike are foregrounding matters falling under the umbrella of social justice and, as a consequence, questioning what were once considered core professional values, including intellectual freedom, library neutrality, freedom of expression, and, indeed, a commitment to democracy itself (for example, see CAPAL 2019; Popowich 2019, 2020). To resolve this tension, there are calls in the literature for librarianship to “develop deeper and more nuanced foundations for its values” (Knox 2020, 9).

We argue that this crisis over professional values and ethics is owed not just to the fact that neutrality in the service of intellectual freedom has never been adequately defined (the term doesn’t actually appear in the ALA Library Bill of Rights or its Code of Ethics), but to an absence of an institutional (and in LIS programs, pedagogical) focus on situating the public library and librarians as political actors in a multicultural and largely urban society. Specifically, librarianship has no fully articulated *political theory* describing the library’s role in democratic governance, as well as a *professional praxis* based on facilitating this role. In the absence of such theoretical foundations, library professionals have tended to reduce the debate to one over “abstract” principles unto themselves, rendering them more vulnerable to criticism or outright rejection. Yet the history of public librarianship since its inception—and in particular since the 1980s—is that of the general advancement of social justice through access, resources, and inclusion for communities that are discriminated against, marginalized, or unheard (Wiegand 2015).

To transcend this current impasse and establish a framework integrating intellectual freedom and socially just processes whereby all community stakeholders may be brought to the table, we argue for a theoretically informed, multi-dimensional understanding of neutrality in the context of libraries as public institutions, and a commensurate professional stance utilizing theories originating in the fields of political science and urban planning. By theorizing and understanding the librarian as a situated (but ethically constrained) political actor we believe librarianship can find more durable foundations for realizing the conjoined goals of intellectual freedom *and* social justice. In this article, we

introduce key political science and urban planning theories to demonstrate how they support principled institutional neutrality, and argue that such a framework bolsters the democratic role of public libraries in both facilitating intellectual freedom and in permitting expression by multiple diverse voices in the community.

We begin by noting that the debate over intellectual freedom and social justice in libraries is not occurring in a policy vacuum nor is it a current phenomenon, but instead has seen expression in a variety of forms for most of the last century since the ALA established the Library Bill of Rights (BoR) in 1939.¹ It begins in earnest with a 1972 article by David Berninghausen (in which he argued that librarians should not be advocating for social causes beyond their expertise) and was the subject of an edited volume *Questioning Library Neutrality* (Lewis 2008) as well as a major historical analysis of its early years by Toni Samek (2001). In an effort to reconcile this tension, Burgess (2016) proposes a virtue ethics approach in which an ethic of fulfilling a given library’s “purpose in order to promote flourishing” would assist in determining if a response to conflict would be prudent or imprudent (170). Given that partisans of both neutrality and social justice could easily interpret this ethic to apply equally to their respective points of view, this approach would seem insufficiently robust.

A significant manifestation of this debate emerged at the ALA’s 2021 Midwinter Meeting, at which the ALA Council

1. Adopted June 19, 1939, by the ALA Council; amended October 14, 1944; June 18, 1948; February 2, 1961; June 27, 1967; January 23, 1980; January 29, 2019.



adopted a “Resolution to Condemn White Supremacy and Fascism as Antithetical to Library Work” (ALA 2021a), which states that the profession’s “misplaced emphasis on neutrality” had “upheld and encouraged white supremacy.”² The social justice ethic behind the resolution also informed the ALA’s decision to insert later in 2021 a ninth clause to its Code of Ethics:

We affirm the inherent dignity and *rights* of every person. We work to recognize and *dismantle systemic and individual biases*; to *confront inequity and oppression*; to enhance diversity and inclusion; and to advance racial and social justice in our libraries, *communities*, profession, and associations through awareness, advocacy, education, collaboration, services, and allocation of resources and spaces. (ALA 2021b, emphasis added)

As part of our *problematique* we would point out that this new ethic raises significant questions, namely that it sets no practical limitations on the library worker as an agent of social change. Will they be expected to “confront inequity and oppression” everywhere? If so, will it be universally accepted among library workers in each case who the oppressors are? It also doesn’t clarify how library workers might address systemic biases in society or—more troublingly—that there might be ethical concerns in intervening in the minds of individuals to “dismantle” their “individual biases,” an interventionist stance some have likened to social engineering or “soulcraft” (Hartman-Caverly 2022). To address these issues, we shall revisit this ethic later in this paper in light of our analysis.

Before we present our argument we also need to clarify our use of key terms. *Social justice* as popularly understood is fraught with conflicting definitions premised on either a focus on achieving equality of socioeconomic *outcomes*—i.e., the degree to which individuals belonging to particular marginalized groups have materially benefited from the *distribution* of resources and opportunities—or on the transparent fairness of *process*, which is to say the *means* by which resources and opportunities are distributed (see Lind 2010; Silver and Iceland 2021). Given this paper’s focus on political and planning processes, the latter definition shall prevail.

We are using urban planning theories to address this controversy for three reasons: (1) like librarianship, planning is oriented to working toward the public interest; (2) planning as a profession has also had its own struggle defining

and negotiating the tensions between practitioner neutrality and social engineering; and, most importantly, (3), because contemporary librarianship is presuming to adopt a broadly interventionist mission of social change for which it was never intended, planning has always been an explicitly interventionist profession and, as such, possesses the history, theory, ethics, and discourses fit to that purpose, and from which librarianship might learn.

Literature Review: Politics and Planning Libraries and Modes of Governance

The primary training of librarians is in information content, not politics. But we feel it is important that librarians and libraries understand themselves as political agents as well as information agents. More exactly, with regard to “neutrality,” that they are agents of the state, with all that entails. As such, expectations on library government and behavior fall within the general operational parameters of these jurisdictions, including their governance, their legal obligations, and their engagement with what we quaintly now call their “stakeholders” (i.e., the public they serve). Publicly funded libraries are, in fact, government organizations and should be analyzed as such. Understanding libraries as government agencies allows one to generalize the case of community engagement and the role of public service professionals within that role.

We begin with the assumptions of John Rawls’ *political liberalism*, which he calls a “freestanding” conception of political association in which a well-ordered society seeks a minimum base of shared morality—or ideal of the good life—on which all can agree, so that we can have a foundation on which to negotiate our larger political and metaphysical disagreements (Rawls 1993). Rawlsian liberalism has no content or ideal conception of society of its own beyond creating the political associations necessary for resolving conflict. Along with Wenzler (2019), we believe that Rawls’ political liberalism offers a basic political and philosophical foundation for library neutrality, as both have powerful moral imperatives of their own.

Without delving too far into political theory,³ for practical purposes it is sufficient to say that the nature of state institutions in a liberal-democracy can be seen as either pluralist in terms of accounting for and representing actors and interest groups (Dahl 1971); instrumental or structural agents of capitalism (or other structures such as patriarchy); or neo-institutional agencies with their own independent rationale, based on a construct to resolve sociopolitical

2. In December 2021 the Working Group made public a draft recommendation that the term “Radical Empathy” be considered as a replacement for neutrality-related language.

3. We acknowledge here some damage done by brevity to the nuances of the following theoretical descriptions.



problems (Khachaturian 2019). Furthermore, what makes them democratic can be adjudicated as either the participatory decision-making of individuals or a more normatively legal form, based on a broad incorporation of human rights and cultures (Seeberg 2012). It is fair to say that when looking at their own role and agency, librarians do not generally view, conduct, or operationalize their work according to any of these frameworks.

We have therefore looked to Dunleavy and O’Leary’s classic *Theories of the State* (1987) to help synthesize and resolve these contestable issues of the meaning and practice of the state into an operational framework. These authors posit that the *mode* of the state is more analytically important than the *form* of the state in understanding how a state operates. The analytical value is that it elides theoretical constructs to focus on how particular states are understood to operate, rather than whether the state meets specific Marxist, neo-liberal, authoritarian, corporatist, liberal-democratic definitions, or any of the other many labels and lenses through which we view the underlying power and structural dynamics of “the state.” By extension, the framework applies to the operation of any state agency: so in our case, the lofty term “the state” is applied to mean libraries, notably those run at municipal and state/provincial levels.⁴

According to Dunleavy and O’Leary these various types of states—regardless of their ideological foundations—operate as *ciphers*, *guardians*, or *partisans*. Briefly:

- *Cipher states* are those where the state itself evinces little self-interest in policy outcomes. One can think of the state as an arena in which policy choices are made on a case-by-case basis, or a weather vane that moves according to the political winds. Compared to social forces, the state is relatively weak, and may be perceived as not having its own interests. Neutrality is expressed in absence, or as mechanistic approach to problem-resolution.
- *Guardian states* are those with a strong sense of institutional force as a “balancer” serving the public interest. The state (and its officials) may have a personal sense of their role to balance social forces and counter what it sees as instability or crises, but position themselves as neutral—that is, ensuring the integrity and proper functioning of the political system and its institutional

mandate—thereby serving the interests of the system itself. The guardian state is seen as an actor in a society of competing actors and/or structures. Effective guardian states have a strong sense of identity and see policy-making to require equally strong state capabilities to balance competing interests in society.

- *Partisan states*, as the name implies, hold a partisan interest in their own favor. The state’s interests, or those of individuals or actors within the state machinery, predominate. Public interest is secondary to serving state/actors’ interests. Partisan states see the need for a strong, perhaps dominant state to resolve intractable problems. Neutrality is absent, or equated to silent assent. (Dunleavy and O’Leary 1987, 327–34).

It is a given that in liberal-democratic countries, the population tends to view electoral politics as a cipher-state, a political arena in which politics happens. This is a pluralist view of the state, where citizens and interests tell the state agencies what policy outcomes they want, mainly via an indirect process of elections to appoint political leadership to direct said agencies (ministries, departments, government corporations, etc.). Policy outcomes shift according to elections, with issue interest groups often applying pressure or persuasion via public (or private) communication. This is the arena in which the public situates government institutions, including the public library.

The library is, after all, a public agency (and place) providing demanded services for taxes rendered. The margins of debate usually focus on two issues: costs, or how much can society afford (and/or to what extent should a public agency “distort” the market by providing information for free), and information content, what constitutes the bounds of acceptable information (e.g., debates over controversial books and speakers).

However, libraries and librarians see their role differently than does the public: as a profession and as a class of agency, libraries and librarians have officially adopted what amounts to a guardian-state role. This is essentially a Weberian understanding of a state agency: a professional organization run according to professional competencies to provide efficient, rational, and optimal outcomes based on expertise (Freidson 1999). The Weberian competencies themselves come from education, expertise, self-governance, and technical knowledge of a certain intellectual kind (Saks 2016).

The astute reader will immediately see the tension between democratic direction and oversight of public institutions (like the public library) on the part of citizenry, versus the internal professional standards defined and monitored by professional bodies (like the American Library

4. Public libraries in the North American federal countries are funded and governed by a mix of municipal and state (US) or provincial (Canada) legislation, ultimately at the mercy of the state/provincial tier. In other unitary states such as the UK, ultimate policy authority may reside with the national government.



Association). Less evident is the considerable tension *within* professions on these same issues, as expressed via professional goals and standards, responsiveness to democratic participation and oversight, democratic outcomes, educational outcomes, and normative values. Because most professions—such as doctors, lawyers, engineers, and pharmacists—focus entirely on the “profession,” they are usually unversed and undertheorized in the state and society frameworks required to operationalize their practice, or how to discuss and synthesize such issues into the profession. Librarianship as a profession is no different (for example, see ALA 2019a).

All libraries are bound by the legal framework of the states in which they operate. One would expect national (and subnational) variances on interpretation of the public good and public policy, i.e., political-cultural and legal frameworks on such things as the parameters of speech and the public domain.⁵ In Canada, for example, compared to the United States, one doesn’t see specific mention of First Amendment rights or on Fair Use in copyright, but rather references to what constitutes “hate speech”—an allowable qualifier of expression under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms—and limits on Fair Dealing related to copyrighted materials.

This deference to constitutional legality is clearly expressed in, for example, library policies on programs and space where there are narrower discussions on legal obligations and of conflict—on how, for example, to manage space legally and to shut down conflict using other definitions of content or behavior that can be applied equally without challenging the informational content of the speech (Minow and Lipinski 2002, 234). In other words, one can enforce decorum, but, in the interest of neutrality, not views. From the ALA very little is said on space as a *public* institutional space: Article VI of the Library Bill of Rights aside, public space management is instead discussed instrumentally in terms of what parts of the library constitute public space, as opposed to nonpublic (staff and operational) space, or issues of freedom of information related to a library’s legal/constitutional requirements, i.e., what meets the tests of a legal challenge (ALA 2019b).

There is, in other words, a strange silence on a clear, principled, and epistemologically grounded statement on how

and why one manages public space in the public interest *as a state agency*. The problem of this absence becomes clear once we compare different understandings on the part of stakeholders regarding of the mode of the state. This represents in our view a significant and scarcely recognized potential for conflict between the library and its community based on this misunderstanding of whom and what the library is serving—people as individuals versus an impersonal, professionally determined “public interest.”

This silence—indeed, vacuum—also provides temptation for the profession to take a lead role in defining for itself the goals and outcomes of service, notwithstanding how it is historically and institutionally embedded in society: professional and organizational “mission creep,” if you will. Thanks largely to advocacy from within the profession, libraries and librarianship have gone far from their early roots of promoting “good books” that promoted acculturation to understand more fully the differences in power and structure that create barriers to accessing government and social resources fairly and seamlessly. Yet the definition of terms such as “equality” and “equity” remain highly contestable, and the effectiveness of such outcomes are equally contested.

Arguments over value-laden terms such as “equity,” “equality,” “rights,” and “democracy” are expected by both the cipher- and guardian-state modes. They anticipate these challenges and the difficult means required to work through such contestation as played out through public governance of library systems via boards and other elected representatives. But within the library profession there are those who wish to take a more partisan-state mode to resolve specific issues quickly by bypassing process. In short, there is a belief on the part of many library professionals that, for interests of (quick) justice to specific groups, neutrality is to be set aside in favor of a partisan-state mode.

Yet in public policy, as in democracy, process is at least as important as the outcomes to maintain stability, legitimacy, and ultimately public trust in public institutions, all of which are necessary conditions for maintaining democracy. Library management needs an understanding of process and a set of concepts and principles behind it that reflect public policy and what we mean by the “public interest.” In sum, we propose that libraries need a “guardian” statement concerning the public interest as equally developed and as powerful as its principles on information-content management and freedom of expression. We propose that the source of such a statement may be found in the literature of urban planning theory.

5. Nonetheless, across the established liberal democracies, one sees numerous iterations of library professions and libraries generally following similar and equate-able national positions to that of the ALA on their respective stewardship and democratic roles with the state and society. And to be clear: we the authors see all the above values and interests as important and valuable, things libraries need to cleave to in order to fulfill their role in the interests of a democratic society.



Planning Theory

The aim of planning wrote John Friedmann (1987) is to “link scientific and technical knowledge to actions in the public domain,” which would include both “processes of societal guidance” and “processes of social transformation” (38). To make these linkages, the planner must first engage in problem formulation by asking, what is the nature of the problem or challenge facing society in which the planner may be able to ethically and effectively intervene? This task is inherently complicated by the recognition that social problems related to the urban environment are inherently “wicked” because both causes (and solutions) are difficult to isolate: each problem is unique, may be symptoms of other problems, and the outcomes of any attempt on the part of a professional to address them are simply not foreseeable and inevitably have an effect on members of the public, such that there is no way to determine if they are ever finally “solved” (Rittel and Webber 1972).

It is therefore essential that planners establish, articulate, and demonstrate the justification for planning in terms of promoting the public interest or the public good.

Rational Comprehensive Planning and Its Critics

Such justification was assumed as given in planning’s rational comprehensive model (RCM) first set out by American economist and political scientist Herbert Simon in his classic 1945 book, *Administrative Behavior: A Study of Decision-Making Processes in Administrative Organization*, in which he distinguished between the *facts* of science used in administration (i.e., planning) and the *values* inherent in politics (Simon 1945/1976). In the RCM model, all relevant planning knowledge is empirical, and the planner’s approach to knowledge is entirely positivist, while expertise is vested in the planner, who acts in an objective, neutral manner on behalf of the public for the public good. Dominant in planning practice and discourse throughout the postwar era, RCM has been heavily critiqued for its view of the public good, which is based on an undifferentiated conception of the public, with no attention paid to diverse needs arising from gender, race, ethnicity, or class (Sandercock 1998). Furthermore, because of the centrality of the planner’s expertise, the opinions, goals, needs, and aspirations community members are of secondary consideration, if at all (Mäntysalo 2005).

Incrementalism and Advocacy Planning

In the face of growing public distrust of urban planners as a result of the excesses of urban renewal decried in Jane Jacobs in her classic work *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961/1992), many postwar theorists moved to

reject top-down monothetic solutions applied universally, and instead proposed alternative planning models. These emphasized incrementalism over massive all-at-once development (Lindblom 1959), and greater attention to working with residents on resolving community problems rather than imposing solutions from without. This necessitated a break with any notion that the planner’s work was neutral and value-free, and that they could approach planning problems in a detached, objective manner. An early such model was Paul Davidoff’s advocacy planning (1968), which envisioned a planning process that would work more like the legal system in which plans would be adjudicated before planning commissions, thereby giving residents from many different backgrounds a voice in matters that affected them. Abandoning their value neutrality, planners would advocate on behalf of a plurality of resident interests, explicitly tying residents’ values with their own.⁶

Radical Planning

The incrementalism inherent in advocacy planning prompted theorists beginning in the early 1970s to promote more radical alternatives to effect swifter structural, social, and political changes, and rejected advocacy’s even-handed pluralism in favor of redressing inequities faced by marginalized populations (Reese 2018). In this mode, “the community is the planner, and the professional is the hired gun, the technician . . . and cannot impose his/her values on the community” (Sandercock 1999, para. 10).⁷

Far from RCM’s planning *for* citizens, and the planning *with* practiced by advocacy planners, radical planning becomes planning *by* the community itself, with the planner as its agent. For John Friedmann, however, no matter how committed a radical planner may be to a given community’s “project of emancipation,” they must not be “absorbed by it” or they can run the risk of undermining their own ability to mediate community conflict. Harper and Stein (2006) concur, agreeing that the planner should ideally not be “an advocate of the interests or positions of one particular community or group. Rather, the planner seeks to democratize the planning process, to open it up to everyone, to make information freely available, to encourage all voices to speak” (146). This is the goal of collaborative planning.

6. There was also in public libraries a contemporary equivalent: advocacy librarianship, in which the librarian would not just refer patrons to other sources of information but take a more proactive role in assisting them in navigating these external services or bureaucracies (Owens and Braverman 1974).

7. Note that this is very much the essence of the cipher state model: the planner has no interest of their own but responds to the policy demands of stakeholders.



Communicative/Collaborative Planning

Taking as its foundations Jurgen Habermas' notions of communicative rationality (1987), planning based in communicative action (also referred to as collaborative planning) replaced the "self-conscious autonomous individual [with] a notion of reason as inter-subjective mutual understanding arrived at by particular people in particular times and place" (Healey 1992, 150). The communicative turn in planning envisions groups of people "making sense together while living differently" (Forester 1989, 118), resulting in a distinct form of planning. As such, views on the part of individuals holding diverse interests and expectations regarding their community and future will develop these through social interaction, which policymakers need to take into account (Healey 1997, 29).

Accordingly, communicative planning is not *future defining* but rather *future seeking* (158); as regards the *goals* of each planning processes, the planner is neutral. The planner must recognize the interests of diverse stakeholders—some of whom may be otherwise marginalized by the political process—and create a structure through which these interests can be balanced and consensus hopefully obtained (Forester 1989; Healey 1997).

Planners Negotiating Difference through Incrementalism

This brief review demonstrates that planners have struggled to fully and definitively articulate how different modes of planning may support the public interest. More specifically, we can see that planning shares with librarianship considerable tensions and ambiguities where neutrality is concerned—tensions that result from the "wickedness" of planning problems (Rittel and Webber 1972) as well as the complexity involved in identifying and negotiating what is in the public interest. This is because each constituency in a given community will have its own aspirations; as Rawls (1982) put it, there are "many conflicting and incommensurable conceptions of the good" (in Campbell and Marshall 2002, 178), meaning that any attempt to assume a single "public good" will disguise or erase multiple diverse interests. This is why "the only possible justification for planning in a postmodern democratic society is an incremental one. The alternative paths to change—coercion and conversion—are not legitimate" (Harper and Stein 2006, 145).

Accordingly, Harper and Stein are adamant in the fundamental importance of retaining core professional values, regardless of the exigency, not only as a matter of principle but because to fail to do so will lead to actual failure in the project of bringing about change:

A practical crisis (such as an environmental crisis or the disintegration of urban society) may suggest the need for radical political change, but it does not necessarily imply the need for a radical methodological and philosophical break with tradition. . . . If radical approaches to planning require a rejection of our fundamental moral notions and much of our underlying liberal democratic consensus, they will not be able to engage in a dialogue with other views that still accept the basic liberal democratic consensus. This leads in the direction of coercive intervention. (182)

We also reject radical approaches, and for these reasons. Instead, with a view to locating our profession's role in navigating conflict between stakeholders in the community, let us now turn to applying these models, principles, and values from urban planning to librarianship and the debate over neutrality and intellectual freedom.

Discussion

We now consider neutrality in professional contexts according to multiple dimensions: neutrality *regarding what, toward whom, in what way, and for what end*. In the literature of conflict mediation, these dimensions are referred to as *value neutrality, stakeholder neutrality, process neutrality, and goal neutrality* (Emran 2015). Based on the foregoing literature review, we define these dimensions accordingly:

- **Value neutrality:** We distinguish two interpretations of this principle: Value Neutrality 1 (VN1) is the presumption on the part of the practitioner that one is purely objective and separate from the object of study; that only positivist, empirical facts matter with no reference to any value system or ideology held by any party; and that one's own values will have no bearing on the analysis at hand. Value Neutrality 2 (VN2) by contrast refers to the reflexive awareness on the part of the practitioner that one's values should not be imposed on stakeholders and so an ethical practice is put in place to prevent this from happening.
- **Stakeholder neutrality:** The extent to which all interested stakeholders are treated equally by the practitioner, who expresses neither negative bias or favoritism toward them.
- **Process neutrality:** Ensuring that the forum provided for the sharing of information, ideas, and argument functions in a transparent and equitable manner, i.e., gives full access to the same information and provides all stakeholders with the same opportunity to participate in decision-making.
- **Goal neutrality:** Allowing the stakeholders in a given process to "make sense together" and establish their desired



planning goal, rather than imposing or steering participants to the practitioner’s preferred conclusion.

To illustrate, let us consider these forms of neutrality manifest in different modes of urban planning:

Table 1: Dimensions of Neutrality in Different Modes of Planning

	Value Neutrality	Stakeholder Neutrality	Process Neutrality	Goal Neutrality
Rational Planning	Yes—VN1	No	No	No
Advocacy Planning	No	No	Yes	No
Radical Planning	Yes (Ideally)—VN2	No	No	No
Communicative/Collaborative Planning	Yes—VN2	Yes	Yes	Yes

We can see from these very different modes of planning practice that “neutrality” does not mean one single thing but may be expressed and realized in several ways within the same profession. The rational planner may see themselves and their work as value neutral (VN1), but they are explicitly not neutral toward stakeholders, whom—to the extent that they are considered at all—are but an undifferentiated “public” on whose behalf they are acting. Nor does such planning espouse either process or goal neutrality, for it is at every stage directed by the planner to achieve specific outcomes deemed to be in the public interest. Viewed in this way, this form of planning most identified with “neutrality” is revealed to espouse only one dimension (and version) of it. Advocacy planners, by contrast, openly reject both versions of value neutrality but recognize and embrace their own values and tie these to those of residents and their shared goals; yet they do defer to the neutrality of planning processes managed by planning commissions to adjudicate plans fairly. Radical

planners should ideally adopt the second form of neutrality (VN2) and are warned not to so completely adopt the values of the community in the effort to achieve their specific ends that they cannot mediate conflict.

Finally, communicative/collaborative planners embrace practitioner neutrality throughout the planning process. Like radical planners, they also adopt VN2 in respect to their own values, striving not to impose them on stakeholders. Planners work fairly with stakeholders in “making sense together,” establishing the parameters of informed dialogue and debate, the goals of which are not predetermined but negotiated democratically by those stakeholders. Even though practitioners of this form of planning may say that they reject neutrality (e.g., Healey 1992), in the end they can be seen to embrace it (VN2) in all its dimensions.

For the librarian, we suggest that communicative/collaborative planning offers the most salient model of neutrality:

Table 2: Dimensions of Neutrality in Communicative Librarianship*

	Value Neutrality	Stakeholder Neutrality	Process Neutrality	Goal Neutrality
Librarianship	Yes—VN2	Yes re: access to materials	No re: services	Yes

*This appellation is tentative; unfortunately for our purposes, the term “collaborative librarianship” already exists in the literature in reference to other models.

In this conception, the librarian is aware of their own values but does not (as per the ALA Library Bill of Rights) allow them to unduly influence collection development or public programming, cognizant that these are not universally shared among their community of users (VN2). The librarian further strives to be neutral toward *materials* to be used by stakeholders, that is, the informational containers through which

ideas are to be made available, but *not to the ideas themselves*. Nothing in this ethic would imagine librarians as technocrats with no professional agency, or insensible to truth claims. The librarian is fully aware of the need to discern between ideas that are evidence-based and those that aren’t, with the former (like evolutionary biology) being well-represented in the collection while the latter (like “intelligent



design”) are represented only to the degree that users may be informed of their basic ideas, evidentiary status (or lack thereof), and social context, thus strengthening (as John Stuart Mill argued) our knowledge of what is true (Mill 2011).

The librarian is also neutral regarding their community of stakeholders *as a whole*, all of whom are equally welcome to participate and engage with library content and public speakers, from which members of the public are free to draw their own meaning and achieve their own goals, either singularly or collectively. At the same time, as regards library services to members of the public *as individuals*, librarians are not neutral but instead empathetically recognize their users all have particular needs.

Where public controversies are concerned—toward which diverse community stakeholders maintain contending interests—the librarian again maintains public neutrality. The *processes* by which community stakeholders exchange views on these debates—commonly through public events, speeches, meetings, and presentations—must not be constrained or distorted by the views of the librarian. It is in the public interest that these matters be provided a public forum; to refuse to allow the library to provide this forum to legal speech acts would be an abdication of responsibility. Finally—and most significantly—the *goals* for which users are accessing materials or attending public lectures are left up to them; in this the librarian needs to remain neutral, respecting the autonomy, agency, and aspirations of the user and their communities.

Neutrality in this conception is not passivity on the part of the librarian but rather requires agentic action and decision-making (Knowles 2018). It empowers library users, as opposed to infantilizing them by “protecting” them from ideas (or actions) that the librarian may personally reject. It is not, however, an absolute standard—no collection will ever be perfectly balanced or contain “all” points of view—but is rather a normative aspiration.

Neither is it “moral relativism” or an “ethical regime whose standards are defined by transient events” as some critics would have it (Good 1993, 144). The four dimensions of communicative librarianship’s neutrality—value neutrality (VN2), stakeholder, process, and goal neutrality—allow libraries to respond constructively and thoughtfully to transient events, and not be swept up in them, which is precisely to what an abandonment of these principles would lead. Take away librarianship’s commitments to these dimensions of neutrality and our profession forsakes its primary means of engaging with, contesting, and integrating new ideas.

Here we come to the crux of our argument: It makes all the difference in the world if a profession assumes one of the two versions of neutrality, either that of the purely objective

expert who doesn’t consider the possibility that their own judgments are value-laden and biased (here referred to as VN1), as opposed to situated, reflexive practitioners who are aware of their own values and choose for ethical and political reasons not to impose them on others (VN2). This, then, is the fundamental error in the extant debate over library neutrality: that virtually all critics have mistaken the second form—which is deeply principled and ethical—for the first, which is simply arrogant presumption.

Far from representing an *absence* of ideology, multidimensional library neutrality acknowledges that values are present in every aspect of librarianship and as a consequence *aspires to minimize* the impacts of these on the intellectual freedom, choices and agency of individuals.

From a political science perspective, it is critical that libraries remain committed to continuing the virtuous circle of democracy. How libraries are embedded into the overall fabric of public institutions is a large part of their function, and more importantly, the basis of their political support—after all, regardless of the state of local economies and regimes of taxation, public support for libraries remains high. As Gardner (2022) points out, providing services in a neutral manner “is what librarians are *required* to do and how they are *required* to act as recipients and stewards of taxpayer funding” (13, emphasis in the original). “Going rogue” by forsaking long-standing and publicly-declared values could render libraries unable to fulfill their task and vulnerable to criticism, to say nothing of a loss of public and political support, and potentially a loss of funding. For all library patrons—including and especially those who are marginalized and discriminated against—this would be a disaster.

With this in mind then, let us now attempt to rewrite the ALA Code of Ethics clause #9 quoted above. Under a commitment to the four dimensions of library neutrality and the practices of communicative librarianship, just a few small changes in wording and intent that scale back the commitments to those within the scope and competencies of librarianship result in very different implications for the relationship between the library and its users:

We affirm the inherent dignity and *autonomy* of all library users (**Stakeholder Neutrality**), and each user’s *right to access the collections* and services of the library for their own purposes (**Goal Neutrality**). We work to recognize and *dismantle potential barriers to access [which are created by “wicked” social problems]* that may be experienced by members in our communities as a result of their experiences of socioeconomic status, race, sex, ability, etc. We work to advance structures and processes that *strengthen our profession and our institutions’ abilities* to provide all with opportunity for knowledge,



education, participation, and dialogue (**Process Neutrality**), through advocacy, instruction, collaboration, services, and *equitable resource allocation* to collections representing multiple points of view, and spaces devoted to free inquiry and encounters with difference (**Value Neutrality 2**).

This revised ethic—a “guardian statement” if you will—acknowledges the social responsibility of the library to do whatever it can to identify and eliminate barriers to access that may exist as a consequence of socioeconomic forces, while respecting the user’s agency and strengthening the institution’s functioning to accomplish both.

In the diverse, multicultural “cosmopolis” (Sandercock 1998) of the twenty-first century—comprising as it is of individuals embedded within diverse communities and representing hundreds of cultures from around the globe—such a stance becomes the only ethically justifiable one for a publicly funded institution. Assuming or imposing on that society a monolithic value system (however righteous one personally believes it to be) is insupportable. To articulate and effect such a vision, a virtue ethic approach is insufficient (Burgess 2016).

The assertion on the part of the library profession to be representing the public good can only be justified and legitimate to the extent that it permits and facilitates heterogeneity and the expression of competing claims on the part of multiple publics. Claims of anticipated harm on behalf of one constituency arising from future speech acts must be weighed against the possibility that the interests or rights of another—potentially marginalized—constituency may be materially harmed or abridged if the ideas in question are *not* expressed.

This view on the value of free speech is reflected in philosopher and educator Alexander Meiklejohn’s conception of the First Amendment of the US Constitution in terms of Americans’ right to self-governance: it enables individuals to make informed choices as part of what he conceived of as the “Electoral Branch” of government, being a fundamental element of American democracy. What is notable for our purposes is that Meiklejohn placed a primacy on the *political ideas* needing sharing, rather than simply on the unfettered *right of people to talk*, emphasizing instead the importance of free speech to the hearer, rather than the speaker (Meiklejohn 1948).

This is why library neutrality is actually essential to the ongoing processes associated with social justice efforts: it provides the means by which all stakeholders may participate in the library, and from which all may benefit.

Conclusion: Librarianship and Socially Just Processes

The relevance of urban planning models to the present debate in librarianship should be clear: principled professional neutrality regarding values, stakeholders, processes, and goals are essential to the institutional project of ensuring and preserving democratic processes of governance that facilitate intellectual freedom. Abandoning core professional values, justified *pour pouvoir* by declaring some urgent crisis, can only serve to disable the profession’s ability to contribute to democratic processes, and instead risks illiberal ends. Instead, we urge librarians to consider emulating the goals of planning in creating the conditions for deliberative, democratic dialogue with the intention of negotiating differences and bringing about incremental changes that are consensually-arrived at through a governance of place specific to each local context.

In this article, we suggested that historic and current tensions between intellectual freedom and social justice goals have persisted because LIS on its own has not provided a sufficient theoretical foundation for neutrality as a professional value, nor even adequately defined it. Therefore we proposed that a new professional praxis adapted from urban planning theory and premised on foundations borrowed from political science could provide librarianship with a revitalized, grounded, and multidimensional understanding of library neutrality that would be commensurate with these challenges.

With these insights and stances undergirding librarianship, the traditional core professional values of neutrality, intellectual freedom, and freedom of speech are no longer possible to be viewed as isolated and operationalized unto themselves. Nor should they be abandoned lightly: the destabilizing polarization in American society and the rise of authoritarian governments and far-right groups around the world profoundly underscore the need for strong and resilient *liberal* institutions.

There is an inherent public interest at stake in permitting the encounters with difference that public libraries can facilitate. Thus committed to engendering dialogical democratic processes, this guardian mode of librarianship does not seek to impose a monothetic political agenda on users and society as a whole, and will reject radical, revolutionary interventions in society as both illiberal and illegitimate while maintaining a commitment to supporting socially just processes. It is not, after all, the role of librarians to directly fix society’s problems; rather we are committed to providing and nurturing a public institution that can enable societies to identify their problems and seek socially just solutions.



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Intellectual Freedom and Social Justice, Together Again

Schlesinger's *Vital Center* and Library Activism

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*Contemporary debates within American librarianship, and in the country at large, often frame intellectual freedom and social justice as competing or opposed values, but looking back to earlier moments in the intellectual history of libraries and the country demonstrates the fundamental and interdependent relationship that exists between civil liberties and civil rights. In the early Cold War period, librarians and the American Library Association (ALA) engaged in an activist campaign to protect intellectual freedom from threats like anti-communist censorship and loyalty oaths. At the same time, historian and public intellectual Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr.'s *The Vital Center: The Politics of Freedom* laid out a program of radical centrism, capturing the intellectual currents that informed ALA documents like the 1948 Library Bill of Rights and 1953's *The Freedom to Read*. Revisiting Schlesinger's work underscores the extent to which, both historically and in the present, racism and oppression represent primary barriers to the intellectual freedom of Americans and provides an opportunity to explore new framings of fundamental values within the library profession.*

Contemporary librarianship in the United States has developed a conceptual dichotomy between the values of intellectual freedom and social justice. Observers of this dichotomy accurately point to the “Berninghausen Debate” and related events of the late 1960s and early 1970s as the origins of this separation. The legacy of that period remains in the structure of the American Library Association (ALA), with the Social Responsibilities Round Tables, founded in 1969, maintained as a separate entity from the Office of Intellectual Freedom. Debates over the relative importance of intellectual freedom and social justice are consistently among the most explosive within librarianship, whether in public or behind the closed doors of library organizations.



In her outstanding exploration of the philosophical underpinnings of this tension, Emily J. M. Knox identifies both intellectual freedom and social justice as classically liberal values and argues that the frequent heated conflicts between these values within librarianship reflect a tension that exists within liberalism itself. Knox (2020, 9) posits that to overcome this conflict, “the profession must develop deeper and more nuanced foundations for its values.” Maintaining an overly rigid distinction between the values of intellectual freedom and social justice—framing them as competing values that frequently clash—belies the extent to which these values are closely related. Philosophically and culturally, they are the fruits of the same tree. Additionally, as I will attempt to demonstrate, this “competing values” framing can obscure material realities, especially in a country with a long history of oppression like that of the United States, and cause the profession to underestimate the severity of threats to the intellectual freedom of marginalized people.

Looking further back into the history of the American librarianship reveals one possibility for a different framing. Intellectual freedom, as a value or even a concept, has not always been part of librarianship. Historians of the profession detail its rise in parallel with the global political events of the 1940s and 1950s, but we would benefit from a deeper analysis of the way the specific political environment of that period influenced, and continues to influence, the rhetoric of intellectual freedom deployed by the library profession.

The rhetoric of intellectual freedom was not developed as a neutral position, but a political one, embedded and clearly legible in the politics of its day. To establish and explore those connections, I propose to place the documents of the early intellectual freedom movement within the ALA and the library profession as a whole, alongside a popular, influential, and representative political text of the early Cold War: Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr.’s *The Vital Center: The Politics of Freedom*. Schlesinger’s text outlines a “radical centrism” that would preserve the freedom of citizens in the face of threats from right-authoritarian fascists and left-authoritarian communists.

The initial commitment of librarians to intellectual freedom was not a retreat from politics but an embrace of a specific, “radical” centrist political position popular in Cold War America. Schlesinger’s *Vital Center* is an important document of the intellectual depth of that position, but it also acknowledges the pressure that America’s history of racial injustice and continuing commitment to segregation and discrimination would place on the centrist coalition. Similarly, politically engaged librarians of the 1950s and

early 1960s attempted to address issues of segregation and racism using the language of intellectual freedom. In a society so scarred and wounded by racism, pursuing social justice is a prerequisite to securing the intellectual freedom of the individual.

If a postwar centrist consensus ever existed within American librarianship, it shattered in the late 1960s in ways that parallel political developments in the country at large. This shattering produced the current understanding that intellectual freedom and social justice are competing values that require balancing or which represent different political orientations. My hope is that a closer reading of the radical centrist mood that inspired librarians to take up the cause of intellectual freedom in the face of widespread censorship might help us articulate a vision of intellectual freedom that is truly for everyone—one that is not in tension with social justice, but actively advances it.

In the sections that follow, I quote liberally from Schlesinger’s book as well as from documents of the movement for intellectual freedom within libraries of the early 1950s. The specific language used, and the echoes that exist between Schlesinger and the library community, help to establish the shared intellectual environment of the period and to contextualize documents like the Library Bill of Rights and *The Freedom to Read*.

I want to add, by way of positioning myself, that I am not a political centrist, but am in fact a Leftist. The goal of this reading is not to evince nostalgia for a Cold War period that might have seen me blacklisted out of the library profession. Instead, I hope that understanding our profession’s commitment to intellectual freedom as a mode of political action, rather than an expression of neutrality, might make a small contribution to discussions that seek to reinvigorate our professional commitment to ethical action.

Schlesinger’s Radical Center

Toward the end of *The Vital Center*, Schlesinger writes, in a remarkable passage,

The rise of totalitarianism, in other words, signifies more than an internal crisis for democratic society. It signifies an internal crisis for democratic man. There is a Hitler, a Stalin in every breast. (251)

He goes on to quote from Albert Camus’ *The Plague*, comparing the impulse to tyranny, or to succumb to tyranny, to an infectious disease, easily passed from person to person, able to be contained only through constant and communal vigilance. For Schlesinger, the conflict between free, democratic societies and totalitarian regimes on the right and left



is fully internalized; it is fought not just within communities or institutions, but within the body of each individual.

Schlesinger begins his argument with an account of industrialization, which he portrays as alienating and anxiety-producing regardless of the mode of government or economic organization under which it occurs. This anxiety provides an opening for the totalitarian impulse, from within and without. He writes of the failure of both the Right and the Left to resist this impulse with sufficient force and vigor, using language that valorized stereotypically masculine traits (Cuordileone 2000, 515). On the American Right Schlesinger describes the business community and the capitalist system as uninterested in politics beyond the protection of their own interests and unprepared for the challenges of Hitler and Stalin. On the American Left, he finds the “Doughface” progressive (Schlesinger 1949, 38): soft, rather than hard, and easily lured into totalitarianism through his sympathy with communism. Neither the Left nor the Right, Schlesinger argues, is an effective counter against the totalitarian impulse to impose state violence and control. The Left, he argues, succumbs too easily to the communist impulse to seize personal property. The Right, in this formulation, shares with the fascist governments an insufficient respect for personal liberty.

Schlesinger’s concept of a radical center relies explicitly on a modified version of Jean-Pierre Faye’s horseshoe theory, which Schlesinger credits to DeWitt C. Poole (Schlesinger 1949, 145). In this formulation, political moderates, rather than representing a neutral center, are actually at one extreme, occupying the furthest possible position from the twin threats of fascism and communism. When he writes that Poole’s “ingenious solution [reformulates] the right-left classification in terms which correspond to the complexities of this ghastly century” (145), Schlesinger makes clear the close connection between this formulation and the specific threats of his political moment. It is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss the extensive literature regarding the validity of the horseshoe theory, but it is valuable to note the role of this theory in the argument that centrism and moderation can in fact represent a radical position of resistance to the twin threats of Left and Right totalitarianism. Schlesinger makes this most explicit in his conclusion, which defines a “new radicalism”:

The spirit of the new radicalism is the spirit of the center — the spirit of human decency, opposing the extremes of tyranny. Yet, in a more fundamental sense, does not the center itself represent one extreme? While at the other are grouped the forces of corruption—men transformed by pride and power into enemies of humanity. (256)

Schlesinger insists that centrism is not a neutral position but a form of extreme opposition to tyranny. His is an activist centrism, extreme in its allegiance to individual rights to both liberty and property.

The Radical Center’s Commitment to Social Justice

Consistent with his activist vision of centrism, Schlesinger understands issues of social justice as critical to individual freedom. “The sin of racial pride still represents the most basic challenge to the American conscience. . . . It may be foolish to think that we can transform folkways and eradicate bigotry overnight. But it is fatal not to maintain an unrelenting attack on all forms of racial discrimination” (190–91). Later, Schlesinger underscores the threat that America’s racism represents to its foreign policy:

The shocking racial cruelties in the United States or in most areas of western colonialism compare unfavorably with the Soviet nationalities policy (at least as described in Soviet propaganda) and with the long Russian tradition of racial assimilation. This fact gives Communism a special prestige for African or Asiatic intellectuals who have had to suffer under discrimination of color in the West. (230)

It is important to underscore the seriousness with which radical centrists like Schlesinger viewed social justice issues. It may be tempting to view the Cold War center’s interest in racial justice as a cynical desire to eliminate one of Moscow’s most effective criticisms of the West. However, for Schlesinger, civil rights and civil liberties are co-equal priorities. He argues for

the essential importance of issues of civil rights and civil liberties. Every one of us has a direct, piercing, inescapable, responsibility in our own lives on questions of racial discrimination, of political and intellectual freedom—not just to support legislative programs, but to extirpate the prejudices of bigotry in our environment, and above all, in ourselves. (252)

Nowhere in *The Vital Center* is it suggested, as is often argued by librarians, that a commitment to social justice is in tension with the radical pursuit of a free, democratic society. Throughout the work, Schlesinger argues the opposite: that a commitment to social justice is an essential part of the radical centrist program. The radical centrist position, which Schlesinger defines as the position farthest from the tyranny of fascism and communism, and therefore most committed to individual rights, also recognizes that oppression,



discrimination, and bigotry are serious threats to the rights of individuals.

Radical Centrism in Libraries

Schlesinger's radical centrism is a helpful lens through which to view the political commitments of librarians who were engaged with issues of intellectual freedom during the period surrounding the book's publication in 1949. The period from 1948 to 1954 was in many ways formative for the American library profession's understanding of intellectual freedom. Louise S. Robbins (1996) has published an exceptional and detailed history of the profession's attempts to define and advance intellectual freedom during this period. Robbins' history underscores the challenges the profession faced in effectively advancing intellectual freedom in an era of censorship, anti-intellectualism, and pervasive suspicion. While the politics of individual librarians no doubt varied widely, radical or activist centrism provided a framework within which the profession as a whole, and the ALA most specifically, could engage effectively with the political environment of the period.

This study will read Robbins' history and primary documents of the period through the lens of Schlesinger's radical centrism and its synthesis of intellectual freedom and social justice. It will focus briefly on each of four key documents—the 1948 Library Bill of Rights, the Freedom to Read, and the proceedings of the 1953 and 1954 conferences sponsored by the ALA's Committee on Intellectual Freedom (IFC).

Robbins makes a clear case that librarians in the early 1950s saw the 1948 Library Bill of Rights as the beginning of a new professional commitment to intellectual freedom, despite the fact that an earlier version of the document had been adopted in 1939. She cites in particular a stirring 1952 celebration of the document on its "fourth birthday" in the *American Library Association Bulletin* (ALAB) as evidence of "the library profession's dawning awareness of its ethic of freedom" (Robbins 1996, 65). Specifically, the 1948 Library Bill of Rights newly committed librarians to fight censorship at a time when censorship, loyalty oaths, and other repressive practices were seen by many as necessary and appropriate weapons in the fight against communism.

In addition to looking for specific events that spurred professional actions like the Library Bill of Rights, it is helpful to also understand how the broader context, including social and political currents, influenced the field (Campbell 2014). It is perhaps too obvious, but in my experience rarely remarked upon, that the Library Bill of Rights presents itself as both American and patriotic. This deliberate conflation of intellectual freedom with patriotism creates a context in which librarians of the period could write about library

activities using sweeping language that echoes Schlesinger's writing about democracy. In the aforementioned celebration of the fourth anniversary of the Library Bill of Rights, ALAB editor Ransom L. Richardson (1952) writes that "like its antecedents, the Library Bill of Rights can maintain its existence only by the practice of men." The antecedents discussed here are the US Constitution and Bill of Rights. Schlesinger continually stresses the high-maintenance nature of US democracy, often using similarly gendered language. In the conclusion of *The Vital Center*, he writes, borrowing a phrase from Walt Whitman, that "if democracy cannot produce the large resolute breed of men capable of the climatic effort, it will founder" (256). While Schlesinger is more expressive, both authors portray the documents and practice of democracy as under threat and portray the defense of democracy as a masculine activity.

The need to defend the anti-censorship stance against accusations of un-Americanism is especially evident in the third statement of the 1948 Library Bill of Rights, which begins, "censorship of books, urged or practiced by volunteer arbiters of morals or political opinion or by organizations that would establish a coercive concept of Americanism, must be challenged by libraries" (ALA 1948). This is particularly striking in contrast to the next statement, which cites the "free access to ideas and full freedom of expression that are the tradition and heritage of Americans." The document engages directly in a heated public debate about what it means to be American, committing librarians to a stance that equates the maintenance of free expression with patriotism.

In 1952 the IFC convened librarians, journalists, publishers, and academics for their first Conference on Intellectual Freedom. The proceedings of that conference reveal a profession grappling with a very challenging political environment. The introduction to the proceedings begins with an evocative description: "For some time we have been living in a twilight between war and peace" (Bixler 1954, 1). A number of the speakers begin their presentations by addressing the national or global political environment. Schlesinger's *The Vital Center* is included in the bibliography of the conference as a work on "the concept of liberty, including liberty in relation to government."

In his remarks at the 1952 conference, David K. Berninghausen celebrates the Free American Library in Berlin, calling it "our answer to Russian propaganda in Germany" (1954, 70). He evokes a Soviet book-burning campaign and proclaims that "today there are loud voices in America demanding that American libraries copy the methods of Germany and Russia, banning certain expressions of opinion" (70). He goes on to raise the stakes even



further, arguing that “the position of the United States in the world today is such that if we surrender our faith in freedom of thought, it may disappear from the globe” (71). Here libraries, as symbols of free expression, become a form of wartime propaganda, adding essential credibility to America’s case against communism. Here Berninghausen parallels Schlesinger’s argument about the strategic importance of advancing civil rights. To defend its claims to advance freedom abroad, the American government must live up to them at home.

In the following year, the ALA and the American Book Publishers Council released *The Freedom to Read*, a statement that received national attention in the press and elicited a statement in support of intellectual freedom from President Dwight D. Eisenhower. The language of *The Freedom to Read* again contains echoes of Schlesinger’s radical centrism, particularly in its conclusion:

We do not state these propositions in the comfortable belief that what people read is unimportant. We believe rather that what people read is deeply important; that ideas can be dangerous; but that the suppression of ideas is fatal to a democratic society. Freedom itself is a dangerous way of life, but it is ours. (ALA 1954)

Here, the advocate of intellectual freedom—the librarian or the publisher—embraces the peril of free expression and the dangerous ideas that come with it, as a defense against the greater danger of totalitarianism. The statement is explicit in contrasting democratic governments with “totalitarian systems [which] attempt to maintain themselves in power by the ruthless suppression of any concept which challenges the established orthodoxy.” However, the statement’s final point underscores that librarians and publishers cannot remain neutral in the practice of their professions and that their professional judgment is essential to the freedom to read:

It is the responsibility of publishers and librarians to give full meaning to the freedom to read by providing books that enrich the quality of thought and expression. By the exercise of this affirmative responsibility, bookmen can demonstrate that the answer to a bad book is a good one, the answer to a bad idea is a good one. (ALA 1954)

With its dramatic syntax and gendered language, *The Freedom to Read* statement echoes both the tone and the ideas of Schlesinger’s radical centrism. That tone underscores the statement’s activist stance, and places it into a political discourse that portrays the openness to ideas and the

opposition to censorship as a vigorous, patriotic, and masculine defense of democracy.

From the adoption of the revised Library Bill of Rights in 1948 to the publication of the *Freedom to Read* Statement in 1953, the ALA advanced a controversial political agenda in opposition to censorship. This agenda encompassed a specific kind of American patriotism and a centrist political position that resonates at many points with the vision of the vital or radical center that Schlesinger outlines. However, as Robbins repeatedly underscores in her history of the period, the implementation of that agenda within the profession would proceed by fits and starts and struggle to live up to the grand language of ALA’s public pronouncements (Robbins 1996, see 64, 85, 95, 133). In particular, the challenges that the ALA encountered in promoting intellectual freedom in a country where freedom has never been equally distributed are relevant to our current situation.

Intellectual Freedom and Civil Rights

In a discussion group at the 1953 Conference on Intellectual Freedom, academic librarians grappled with an apparent conflict between intellectual freedom and social justice, or to use a term that would have been familiar at the time, civil rights. To a contemporary reader, it is likely to be one of the most fascinating moments of the conference:

The question of whether college or university libraries should select books openly advocating Communist was posed. The consensus of opinion seemed to be that the advocacy of Communism deserved representation in a university library, but Mr. [William S.] Dix reminded the group that if the Communist is allowed to sell his point, the library must logically also include violently anti-Negro or anti-Semitic—anti-anything or pro-anything—books that most college libraries do not now collect. Organizations such as the NAACP and the Anti-Defamation League would then subject the librarian to a further pressure for censorship. No final resolution of this difficulty was achieved by the group, but it became obvious during the discussion that if libraries are to maintain a position of neutrality in controversial subjects, representation in the library of all sides of debatable questions cannot be denied. (Harlow 1954, 120)

Underlying this remarkable moment seems to be the shared assumption that communist works, even when they are of intellectual and research interest, represent the most dangerous possible ideas that a library might include, both from the point of view of opening the library up to political pressure and in the sense of representing a danger to freedom itself. In 1953, a library that contained communist works



could not, it appears, make the argument that racist or anti-Semitic works were in fact more dangerous or repellent. The intellectual structure provided by the horseshoe theory is implicit in the discussion—including the dangerous ideas of the Left (communism) necessitates balancing the scales by including the dangerous ideas of the Right (anti-Semitism, with its strong suggesting of Nazism and other European fascisms, and racism).

While recording notes of public discussion is a challenging and thankless task, it is worth noting the gloss our faithful reporter imposes on the discussion. The group, it appears, did not reach a consensus on the issue at hand, but the notes inform us of the logical conclusion—purchase everything, even the racist material. But let's look at the scenario that this solution actually describes. If we are to take this conclusion at face value, it demonstrates that, by demanding the censorship of communist materials, the American Right might in fact be able to force academic libraries to purchase racist and anti-Semitic material for their collections—material they would have ignored were it not for the Right's censorship campaign against the Left.

This scenario demonstrates the difficulty of locating a political center or a stance of neutrality in a system of extremely asymmetrical power and aggression. It also demonstrates why Schlesinger does not apply the horseshoe theory to the question of civil rights, but instead elevates civil rights, along with civil liberties, as co-equal requirements of American freedom. What is on the other end of the political spectrum from racism, from anti-Blackness? What book would a library purchase to “balance out” a racist or anti-Semitic one?

At this point it is worth pointing out that the Library Bill of Rights, much like its namesake, did not, in its first versions, aspire to provide equality to Black library users. Echoing the Constitutional Convention, the library profession could not dictate to its members from the South. In 1941, only four public libraries in the greater South provided full service to Black patrons, with three of those libraries located in Texas; an additional twelve libraries provided limited, segregated service. In 1954, 59 cities and towns provided full service at their main libraries, but 39 of those municipalities were located in either Kentucky or Texas. Five states—Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina—had no public libraries where Black users could receive equal service (Holden 1954). While Paul Bixler of the IFC made inquiries into the state of library services for Black Southerners in 1955, the library profession would not undertake a national conversation about the denial of library service to Black users until 1959 (Robbins 1996, 107). Failure to account for the prevalence and influence of racism in

America can make it very difficult to accurately identify the most serious threats to intellectual freedom.

Oppression as a Primary Barrier to Intellectual Freedom

The problem with trying to separate issues of social justice and intellectual freedom, as our profession has attempted to do, is that, as Schlesinger understood in 1949, racism and discrimination are themselves among the primary threats to the civil liberties of Americans. Some might argue that the events of the intervening decades, in particularly the successes of the Civil Rights Movement, have transformed American society to the point where discrimination and racism are no longer critical threats to our freedom. Within the context of libraries and their commitment to intellectual freedom, this position is untenable, as I believe the following studies and statistics demonstrate. These are just a small sampling of the many contemporary studies that suggest the continued influence of structural oppression on the American marketplace of ideas:

- A *New York Times* study of English-language fiction books published by major publishers between 1950 and 2018 found that 95% of the books were written by White authors. In 2018, 89% of the books published by major publishers were by White authors. (So and Wezerek, 2020)
- In 2008, only 15% of the articles on major opinion (op-ed) pages were written by women. The OpEd project, which has trained nearly 17,000 people since that time in an attempt to improve representation in expert forums, reports that figure had climbed to 26% in 2022. (OpEd Project 2022; Yaeger 2012)
- The Center for the Study of Women in Television and Film publishes an annual report titled “Thumbs Down,” which details the overrepresentation of men among published film critics. In 2022, they found that 69% of film critics were men, 31% women, and 0.3% were nonbinary critics. (Lauzen 2022, 3)
- According to data gathered by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), in 2020, 74% of full-time faculty at US universities were White. Of those who had achieved the rank of full professor, 51% were White men and 28% were White women. (NCES 2020)
- In 2017, ALA found that 87% of its members were White (Rosa and Henke 2017, 3)

Racism, misogyny, homophobia, transphobia, class prejudice—these and other forms of oppression shape our



information environment. They influence the opportunities authors, artists, and other creators receive. They influence the reception of new works and ideas. And, as Schlesinger might point out, they undermine the credibility of our claims to openness and freedom, to our claims that the ideas and values we adopt have won out in an open marketplace of ideas rather than in a rigged old-boys' club or smoke-filled room.

Studies like the ones cited above are rightly used to point out and illustrate the effects of racism and misogyny in specific professional or creative environments. However, taken as a whole, they demonstrate the devastating and profoundly distorting weight of oppression on the overall intellectual and creative environment in the United States. These effects are inevitably reflected in library collections, influencing the freedom to read just as they influence the freedom to write and publish. It is also important to note that lack of access to spaces like publishing, librarianship, and academia is only one of the many continuing effects of slavery and racism on the ability of Black people and communities to build wealth and influence in the United States.

But it is also important to imagine better worlds. Imagine the vibrancy and diversity, the wealth of experience and innovation, that would exist in a truly inclusive American intellectual environment. Imagine library collections animated by the churn of constant cultural and intellectual exchange. During the Cold War, American propagandists used jazz to promote the vibrancy of American culture overseas—imagine a country whose intellectual life lived up to that propaganda.

Another important point underscored by these statistics is that the modern social justice movement, as it relates to racism, is a direct continuation of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s, which was itself a continuation of organized pro-Black civil rights movements that predated the founding of the United States (Carey 2012). There is a tendency in our professional discourse to discuss issues of social justice as taking shape in the 1970s, and therefore of newer interest to the profession and the nation (see, e.g., LaRue 2021). Though often well-intentioned, this narrative disrupts a long and continuous history of pro-Black activism by highlighting only the aspects of that activism that crossed over to gain attention in the mainstream media. It also obscures the extent to which centrist intellectuals of the 1950s, like Schlesinger, saw civil liberties and civil rights as co-equal and related concerns, each of which were critical to America's defense against tyranny.

Conclusion

In concluding I wish to adopt Schlesinger's characteristic sense of urgency and try to answer pressing questions clearly. In pitting intellectual freedom and social justice against one another, the library profession has made a grave mistake and fallen into a messy intellectual and rhetorical quagmire. Inevitably, ideas and political commitments are formed in a specific intellectual and historical context. As contexts change, ideas may sharpen and gain focus, but they may also lose their charge and impact.

In reifying the sense of tension between intellectual freedom and social justice, libraries reflect broader political and cultural debates that portray social justice concerns as inimical to individual liberty. This framing is very effective in producing polarizing arguments, impassioned debate, and engaged television viewers and website users. It is also effective in undermining movements for social justice without addressing or disputing the underlying problems they point to. This framing, however, rarely leads to greater understanding or new consensus.

The library profession has the potential to provide leadership on issues of intellectual freedom. We have a responsibility to develop frameworks and ways of understanding that account for the complexity of our current political and cultural environment, and which can help us build consensus around issues that are critical for libraries, library users, and library workers. Our current political moment is very different from the early Cold War era, but the consequences of the radical centrist politics of that era linger in the profession's public statements and internal debates. Because of those lingering echoes, we can benefit from a more precise understanding of the implications of radical centrism:

1. The commitment of ALA and the library profession to an ethic of intellectual freedom arose not in a moment of political neutrality, but of activism.
2. Schlesinger's radical centrism is a model for understanding the intellectual currents that undergird library advocacy for intellectual freedom during this period. It argues for an activist center, using the horseshoe theory to present the center as the furthest possible position from totalitarianism.
3. Schlesinger's deep commitment to intellectual freedom stemmed not from an absolutist commitment to individual rights but from a belief that civil liberties, along with civil rights, were essential to the survival of the United States in a threatening global environment.



4. Librarians in the early Cold War intellectual freedom movement identified systemic threats to intellectual freedom—communism, fascism, and domestic censorship—and fought against them. However, they underestimated or ignored the effect of racism on the intellectual freedom of Black Americans, as evidenced by their almost complete lack of access to public library services in the South.

This study of a pivotal period in the history of American libraries also has some broader implications. Most importantly, it shows that there is nothing natural or inevitable about our current framework, which separates intellectual freedom and social justice into separate concerns. In fact, at a key moment in the development of the profession's commitment to intellectual freedom, writers like Schlesinger portrayed issues of civil rights and social justice as essential to a free society. This is not to paint Schlesinger as any sort of racial visionary—movements for civil rights and racial justice are older than our country—but to point out the deep and abiding connection between the values of equality and individual freedom.

Secondarily, it demonstrates the importance of identifying true threats to intellectual freedom and of working toward a shared understanding of those threats within the library community. The political circumstances of the early Cold War era galvanized the library profession, enabling an unusual degree of coordinated political activism. In our current political climate, there is in fact widespread agreement that democracy and freedom are again under threat but much less agreement as to where the threat comes from. It is not surprising that librarians struggle to find consensus in the current climate.

Separating social justice from intellectual freedom has led us to ask the wrong questions and to enter into an endless debate that artificially pits two deeply related and interdependent concepts against one another. Instead, maybe we can learn to ask, as Celeste Bocchicchio-Chaudhri (2019) already has: “intellectual freedom for whom?” We can then focus on identifying the most significant threats to intellectual freedom, including threats that affect or actively target the freedoms of marginalized people. We do not all need to agree or speak with one voice, but we do need a framework that allows the library profession to identify and address specific threats to intellectual freedom, including coordinated and systemic threats that mobilize hatred and oppression against marginalized authors and readers.

The current political environment is every bit as challenging as the one American libraries faced in the early Cold War, and we encounter that environment through a haze of spin and misinformation, through the fragmented kaleidoscope of social media or the dull, gray glow of consolidated corporate news. The intellectual framework that puts intellectual freedom against social justice is inadequate for the current moment. They are both underlying values of a liberal democratic society, and they complement each other far more often than not. In the United States specifically, an understanding of social justice—an understanding of the structure and history of oppression—is essential to identifying the most dire threats to intellectual freedom.

When, as Kelly Jensen's ongoing reporting documents, censors organize around the country to demand the removal of books by marginalized authors, or books of interest to marginalized readers—books by the Black authors who pioneered critical race theory, or by LGBTQ authors—the intersection of social justice and intellectual freedom becomes straightforward and apparent (Jensen 2022). Attacks on intellectual freedom do not occur in a vacuum—they are shaped by cultural and political forces. In the United States, sustained and coordinated campaigns against marginalized groups represent the greatest threats to intellectual freedom, both historically and in the current environment.

Certainly some will argue that I have misjudged current threats to intellectual freedom. They might argue, for example, that it is conservative authors and readers, rather than those who are Black or LGBTQ, whose freedom is under the greatest threat within libraries. The discussion that would result from that disagreement, however, strikes me as fundamentally different than the more abstract way in which our profession currently frames debates about intellectual freedom. Such a discussion might be just as divisive, but it might also provide a way to talk about important issues with greater specificity and nuance. This imagined discussion presupposes as fact that racism and bigotry are potential threats to intellectual freedom—the point of disagreement is now whether they are the most significant threats. Our current discourse, which pits social justice against intellectual freedom, obscures the impact of oppression on intellectual freedom. As a profession, we must continue to seek language that more accurately reflects our values and their relationship to our material and political circumstances.



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Emphasizing the Economic

Nancy Fraser, the Cultural-Redistributive Divide,
and Social Justice's PR Crisis

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The philosopher Nancy Fraser defines two paradigms for social justice: the economic and the cultural. These two paradigms often find themselves at odds (the familiar struggle between class politics and identity politics), but only when working in conjunction, according to Fraser, can they reach their emancipatory potential. Contra Fraser, this paper argues that there exist some historical moments in which it is necessary for one paradigm to take precedence over the other. In our current political moment, both the Right and the Left can be said to be fixated on culture, and this fixation ultimately disadvantages the Left: it appears as if the Right has already won the culture war, at least within the minds of a statistically significant portion of the American populace. Legal attempts to protect social justice seem similarly doomed. In order to persuade the public of the advantages of the movement, this paper argues that we must begin to emphasize its universal economic benefits.

According to a recent poll, support for critical race theory (CRT) splits along party lines; 72% of Democrats support it in comparison to 16% of Republicans (Monmouth University Polling Institute 2021, 3). In contrast, when “politicized” language (i.e., “critical race theory”) was removed and replaced with the more neutral term “history of racism,” a majority of those polled (94% of Democrats and 54% of Republicans) favored teaching the subject in schools. This tension—between the generally popular aims of social justice and the ways these aims have been (mis)represented in right-wing media—makes the following clear: social justice has a PR problem.

The authors of the poll venture a similar diagnosis: “A negative visceral message can be very powerful in reframing an issue in the public’s mind” (3). In effect, it seems as if the

Right has already won the culture war. The question then becomes the following: Is there a way to change the cultural narrative surrounding CRT, to reorient the public toward a



more honest accounting of what social justice represents in actuality? This article, while not presented as a total curative, asserts that framing social justice as an economic issue (as opposed to a cultural issue) might be an effective way to rehabilitate the subject in the mind of certain segments of the American public.

How Did We Get Here?

The legal definition of what constitutes free speech has always been slippery, coming under revision during various moments in our history, including in *People v. Ruggles* (1811), which established a legal precedent for prosecuting blasphemy (Dodd 1985). In the 1900s, a flurry of court cases complicated the First Amendment further, reaching a sort of culmination in *Miller v. California* (1971), in which “the Court ruled that community standards and state statutes that describe sexual depictions . . . could be used to prosecute . . . individuals” for obscenity (American Library Association 2017, par. 75). To this day, the definition of obscenity consists of three parts:

First, the average person, applying contemporary community standards, must find that the work, taken as a whole, appeals to prurient interests; second, that it depicts or describes, in a patently offensive way, sexual conduct as defined by state law; and third, that the work, taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value. (par. 75)

One can imagine how this interpretation can (and has) been abused, especially when considering the third part of the definition, as it relies heavily on subjective criteria such as “literary” and “political.” Although no legal challenge has yet to successfully win using this line of reasoning, it is important to acknowledge that such cases have existed throughout history, and that the same nebulous terms often underly the arguments of those seeking to ban books in the present day (Natanson 2022).

Sometimes the attacks on free speech take on extra-legal qualities. This is to say, in conjunction with legal challenges, those who wish to restrict speech often seek to simultaneously co-opt the cultural conversation. The end goal is to limit what is sayable in any given social situation and, in many instances, to restrict the ways individuals can publicly identify. One can recall the Lavender Scare, a 1950s movement that weaponized cultural sentiment against homosexuality, leading to termination of many government employees (Johnson 2009). The important thing to note is that the Lavender Scare, itself an offshoot of the equally suspect Army-McCarthy hearings (Schrecker 2006), represented a merging of legal lines of attack and cultural lines

of attack; in this case, a cultural argument (homosexuality is “anti-American”) needed to exist to justify the legal persecution of queer individuals.

The weaponization of both legal and cultural arguments effectively quells dissent. It is not surprising, then, that the modern Republican Party has returned to this American pastime, wielding the power of state legislatures while stoking a culture war against a new political bogeyman: social justice (Goldberg 2021; Schuessler 2021). In a nonexhaustive list, bills targeting CRT have been passed in or are up for a vote the following states: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Missouri, Montana, New Hampshire, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Washington, West Virginia, and Wisconsin (World Population Review 2022). Taking inspiration from the past, right-wing politicians bemoan the “anti-Americanness” of CRT, the ways it, in the words of Senator Ted Cruz, “views every conflict as a racial conflict” (Bolton 2022).

Of course, librarians across the country have fought—and continue to fight—this two-pronged assault on CRT and social justice. In the realm of culture, one can point to conversations happening daily across our profession, facilitated by organizations like Breaking Library Silos for Social Justice (BLS4SJ) (Austin Public Library, n.d.). On the legal end, the American Library Association’s Office of Intellectual Freedom works tirelessly to address book challenges and, in coordination with the Merritt Fund, offer financial support to library staff

[denied] employment rights because of defense of intellectual freedom; that is, threatened with loss of employment or discharged because of their stand for the cause of intellectual freedom, including promotion of freedom of the press, freedom of speech, the freedom of librarians to select items for their collections from all the world’s written and recorded information, and defense of privacy rights. (American Library Association 2021, par. 3)

One cannot overemphasize the importance of these conversations and resources. Yet the evidence is irrefutable: half of the country remains unpersuaded of social justice’s benefits. We find ourselves in a divided America, where it seems as if the cultural conversation has effectively been won by an insurgent Right. They have a PR line that resonates, that turns people *away* from social justice, or at least away from its culturally transformative promises. Is there a way to bring these people back? Can the Left manufacture a PR line that transcends both the cultural and legal questions altogether? These are the questions to which this paper will now turn.



Fraser's Cultural-Redistributive Divide

To better understand what we mean by “social justice,” it will be necessary to define the concept further. The work of the philosopher Nancy Fraser has been particularly useful in providing a framework for the present discussion; she asserts that there are two paradigms through which we can understand social justice: one in which it functions as a project of “recognition” (*cultural social justice*) and one in which it functions as a project of “economic justice” (*redistributive social justice*) (Fraser 1998). The proponents of each paradigm, Fraser is quick to note, often frame them as inherently antagonistic. We, the political activists, are then “asked to choose between class politics and identity politics, social democracy and multiculturalism, redistribution and recognition” (4).

This observation might seem commonplace today; many theorists and writers have explored the contentious relationship between identity politics and class politics (Gimenez 2006; Walters 2018). One could say, nonetheless, that the question is central to Leftist thought; Marx, at the very least, implicitly recognizes the existence of the two paradigms in his writings on the base (i.e., economic relations between men) and the superstructure (i.e., cultural and legal relations) (Williams 1973).

What makes Fraser's approach different than other critiques, however, is that she believes that the cultural-redistributive divide presents a false dichotomy. A true commitment to social justice, in her view, requires both cultural and redistributive elements. Going forward, the goal of social justice is to create a framework that incorporates both the cultural and the economic:

As soon as one embraces this thesis [the cultural-redistributive divide], however, the question of how to combine them becomes paramount. I contend that the emancipatory aspects of the two paradigms need to be integrated in a single, comprehensive framework. In this lecture, I consider two dimensions of this project. First, on the plane of moral philosophy, I propose an overarching conception of justice that can accommodate both defensible claims for social equality and defensible claims for the recognition of difference. Second, on the plane of social theory, I propose an approach that can accommodate the complex relations between interest and identity, economy and culture, class and status in contemporary globalizing capitalist society. (Fraser 1998, 4)

Fraser's argument leads her to a third term, *participation*, which is the synthesis of the two paradigms: “The normative core of my conception, which I have mentioned several times, is the notion of parity of participation. According to

this norm, justice requires social arrangements that permit all (adult) members of society to interact with one another as peers” (10). In essence, a society built on parity provides equal opportunities for all vis-à-vis participation in *both* the economic and cultural realms. Fraser seems to be incorporating insights from Marx, who also viewed economics and culture as mutually reinforcing structures (Lukes 1982). She might go a step further than Marx, however, when she claims that any movement that seeks to change the culture and the economy must, conceivably, address each one—simultaneously or in turn.

Fraser's arguments are clear and precise, and her conclusion is, in the opinion of this author, irrefutable. No political movement can hope to change the world by ignoring culture and focusing exclusively on economics (or vice versa). This is not this paper's argument. Rather, it seeks to answer the following question: when the pendulum has swung too far in one direction, as is the case in today's political climate, what can be done to return to a place where economic justice and cultural justice are on equal footing?

Redistribution and the Universal

About 43% of the US population self-identifies as Republican (Jones 2022), but this technical minority holds a great deal of political influence because of how the Electoral College favors rural states (Wilson 2019). Furthermore, almost all Republicans reject social justice outright (Monmouth University Polling Institute 2021), meaning that the chance that social justice initiatives will receive any widespread implementation at the level of the state (outside of the ones already sympathetic to the message) is small. If some sort of legislature does pass on the federal level, it will be tenuous, under constant threat from incoming administrations.

It is unclear, too, how the Left could persuade Republicans to accept the cultural aims of social justice, especially when much of the Right's cultural project rests on the outright rejection of pluralism (one of the defining features of social justice) (Ansell 1997). The situation seems even more dire, moreover, when considering that these diametrically opposed cultural positions (sameness vs. difference, totalitarianism vs. multiculturalism) seem more and more like long-lasting fixtures of our political landscape (Brown and Mettler 2022). Two distinct cultures talking *at* each other, with no exchange of ideas. Laws being applied haphazardly, with no universal implementation. This is the political reality of our current moment. The need to create a different line of argument, one that cuts across sameness and difference without falling back on increasingly fragile legal arguments, becomes exceedingly clear.



What feels distinctly unusual in this moment, however, is the lack of a coordinated effort on the Left to make the argument for anything universal, let alone the type of unequivocal free speech laws or cultural arguments that would protect social justice in the classroom. Advocating for unrestricted speech, historically speaking, has been well within the Left's purview. This is most famously illustrated in the history of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), which, until recently, held absolute free speech as a central tenet (Greenwald 2020). In the 70s, they even famously defended Nazis, not because they agreed with their viewpoints (they emphatically did not), but because free speech was seen by the organization as a universal right that extends to all political movements, even the deplorable. Whether unrestricted speech is a moral necessity or not is beside the point; the following is clear: the Left lacks a universal cultural project and needs a new locus around which to organize.

The universal has been the focus of a substantial amount of critical commentary. This paper's understanding of the term may be most influenced by Alain Badiou's inventive reading of St. Paul. In his exegeses on said reading, the scholar Delfo Canceran (2020) writes that

Paul is aware of the composition of the community. However, the new truth exceeds the evident difference that exists between these ethnic groups. We can only receive a new truth by going beyond such differences. This new situation does not mean that the people need to renounce their customs and practices. Instead, they become indifferent to the differences of one another so that they can build a new creation or new humanity. With this in mind, Paul seeks to reorient the members, not in relation to cultural specificities (ethnicity, status or gender), but in relation to truth. (105)

The truth this paper seeks to foreground is economic in nature. The unfair state of the economy has been the basis for numerous political moments in recent years: Occupy Wall Street, the Bernie Sanders Campaign, the election of Gabriel Boric in Chile. The premise that underlies them all is simple: the world is divided into two classes, one which holds most of the wealth, the other which holds a much smaller portion. Difference is not highlighted here. Rather, it is shared experience ("the ninety-nine percent") that sits at the forefront of these movements. This is a sameness, yes, but one that encompasses difference (unlike the right-wing variation discussed earlier); the ninety-nine percent includes people of color, queer people, the disabled. All of these minority groups (in addition to majority-White Republicans) face the same universal struggle.

We can already see the Democratic Party moving toward this economic universalism in their recent rhetoric. President Biden, a deeply controversial figure who is certainly not a committed Leftist by any measure (Savage 2021), included the following language in the press release for his student loan forgiveness program:

- Target relief dollars to low- and middle-income borrowers. The Department of Education estimates that, among borrowers who are no longer in school, nearly 90% of relief dollars will go to those earning less than \$75,000 a year. No individual making more than \$125,000 or household making more than \$250,000—the top 5% of incomes in the United States—will receive relief.
- Help borrowers of all ages. The Department of Education estimates that, among borrowers who are eligible for relief, 21% are 25 years and under and 44% are ages 26–39. More than a third are borrowers age 40 and up, including 5% of borrowers who are senior citizens. (The White House, par. 16–17)

We can see the attention paid to universal categories in this statement (i.e., the cancellation helps "borrowers of all ages," the cancellation excludes the "top 5% of income-earners"). The economic argument outlined above not only bypasses the cultural arguments, which fall prey to the difference and sameness dichotomy expertly weaponized by Republicans, but instead create a third category rooted in economic reality—the ninety-nine percent. Pessimists will point to the negative reaction to the forgiveness from the Republic establishment and even some Democrats (Douglas-Gabriel, Romm, and Stein 2022), but the point remains: the forgiveness points to a potential direction for the Left that avoids the pitfalls of previous legal and cultural defenses of social justice.

Fraser's synthesis of culture and the redistributive remain intact in this analysis; there is no need to abandon her framework for social justice. What is needed, however, is a strategic pause on the cultural front of the project, one that acknowledges its deep unpopularity (manufactured, of course, by the Right). The path to implementing social justice initiatives at a widespread scale might include pivoting, for a short time, to full and unequivocal embrace of the economic at the expense of the cultural.

Conclusion

On both the legal and cultural front, the contemporary Right is attacking social justice. Passing legislation to protect CRT in schools will be limited geographically, while cultural



arguments can do little to persuade those with opinions mediated by the right-wing propaganda machine. Drawing from (and retooling) the work of Nancy Fraser, this article explores the cultural-redistributive divide and ultimately proposes a turn toward a universal economic message. The

argument is not that economics and culture need to be split permanently. Rather, the argument is that the Left might need to take a strategic pause when it comes engaging in the culture war and focus, instead, on producing a more radically redistributive ethos in the short term.

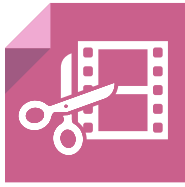
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Nationwide

On June 3, CatholicVote launched a censorship campaign targeting Pride Month displays at public libraries. They called it “Hide the Pride” and instructed those concerned about seeing “rainbow-trans-BLM flags everywhere” to check out all of the titles from their local library’s Pride displays.

CatholicVote also provided a letter template that could be used to protest the representation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+) individuals in library books.

The template reads, “To protect our children and the community, we have checked out the books in the Pride display. We plan to keep these books checked out until the library agrees to remove the inappropriate content from the shelves. Flags, signs, and book displays based on how adults experience sexual attraction and gender identity have no place in an open and public space for children.”

LGBTQIA+ youth are at significantly disproportionate risk for suicide and homelessness. Libraries create safe spaces where they can see themselves represented in books and media. Targeted censorship campaigns against LGBTQIA+ materials send damaging messages to those who identify as LGBTQIA+.

According to The Trevor Project, the recent wave of anti-LGBTQIA+ legislation and censorship are having a deleterious effect. They said their volume of crisis line calls has continued to increase since the fall of 2021.

CatholicVote is a conservative Catholic organization based in Madison, Wisconsin. They consist of an advocacy group, a 501(c)(3), and a political action committee (PAC) that funneled over \$875,000 into supporting conservative candidates in the 2020 election cycle.

The instructions and the letter template CatholicVote distributed in their “Hide the Pride” campaign were employed nationwide in efforts to limit readers’ access to LGBTQIA+ titles.

The campaign resonated with a larger movement opposed to LGBTQIA+ representation in school and public libraries led by organizations like Moms for Liberty and No Left Turn in Education. It is within this context that the reference to Black Lives Matter as part of an anti-Pride campaign makes sense, as those organizations are also working to target books on race, racism, and the lived experiences of those who identify as Black, indigenous, or persons of color.

Reported in: CatholicVote, June 3, 2022; INTO, June 8, 2022; Los Angeles Blade, June 8, 2022.

On July 1, ten laws targeting lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+) individuals in schools went into effect in six states.

The laws include restrictions on the sports teams that transgender athletes can compete on in Indiana, South Dakota, Tennessee, and Utah. Florida and Alabama banned classroom discussions of gender and sexuality. Alabama’s new legal landscape also prohibits transgender students from using bathrooms, locker rooms, and other such facilities that do not align with the gender they were assigned at birth.

Sam Ames, director of advocacy and governmental affairs at the Trevor Project, said these bills only serve to harm a vulnerable population of the student body that is prone to discrimination and was already disadvantaged by a lack of institutional and familial support.

LGBTQIA+ students have higher rates of depression and suicide and civil rights advocates are concerned these laws will have a devastating impact on their mental health. There is also

confusion among school administrators around how most of the laws will be enforced.

South Dakota’s law will be enforced through the actions of private citizens, whom it empowers to sue schools and school districts they believe are not complying with the law. This approach helps shield the state from potential litigation involving Equal Rights Amendment and Title IX violations. This peculiar style of vigilante-enforced state law was pioneered by the state of Texas in 2021 with their six-week abortion ban.

Reported in: The Washington Post, July 8, 2022.

On July 15, Moms for Liberty held their first national conference, drawing around 500 people to a waterfront hotel in Tampa, Florida. The conservative activist group which was started in 2021 by two former school board members has grown to roughly 100,000 members and has chapters in 43 states.

Membership in Moms for Liberty grants access to monthly training sessions with organizational leadership and private webinars with GOP lawmakers and conservative activists.

While Moms for Liberty initially focused on protesting school mask policies and COVID-19 mitigation efforts, they soon shifted to organizing efforts to challenge and ban books from school libraries and oppose the teaching of critical race theory (*see: Journal of Intellectual Freedom and Privacy, v.6 iss.3: For the Record: Nationwide*).

The group has primarily targeted books with characters who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+) and those that deal with race and racism. These include memoirs by members of marginalized communities and picture books about pivotal historical figures like Martin Luther King, Jr., and Ruby Bridges.



Critics of Moms for Liberty have said they are rolling back social progress, sowing division, and driving educators and librarians from the profession. “They’ve turned our schools into political battlegrounds,” said Angela Wynn, co-founder of Support Our Schools.

Exhibitors at the conference included Turning Point USA, The Leadership Institute, Heritage Action for America, and Liberty University, in addition to stalls selling Moms for Liberty apparel.

Sessions included a panel on how to lobby state lawmakers for legislation similar to Florida’s Parental Rights in Education Act, commonly known as the “Don’t Say Gay” law (*see: Journal of Intellectual Freedom and Privacy, v.7 iss.2: For the Record: Florida*).

Speakers included former President Donald Trump’s cabinet members Betsy DeVos and Ben Carson, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, and state senator Rick Scott. Many spoke disparagingly of social-emotional learning, anti-bullying efforts, and school mental health programs, referring to them as communist ideas and forms of indoctrination.

Before his speech, Moms for Liberty founders Tiffany Justice and Tina Descovich presented DeSantis with the “liberty sword.”

DeSantis said the most important elections to focus on were school board elections. He said that “these positions have a significant impact on families’ lives in a way that some other offices may not be able to. . . And I know that this group has gotten it.”

Moms for Liberty has endorsed roughly 270 school board candidates nationwide. Executive director of program development Marie Rogerson said, “They’re coming to us for our endorsement . . . They know the moms are out talking to people and making an impact and they want that on their side.”

Paulina Testerman, another co-founder of Support Our Schools, said that school board candidates with opposing values are frightened of participating in the sorts of hostile board confrontations that are Moms for Liberty members’ forte. “They’re chasing off great candidates because of the chaos they are creating,” said Testerman.

Jonathan Collins, a public affairs professor at Brown University, said that there hasn’t been this much conflict affecting school districts since racial desegregation.

Florida political analyst Susan McManus said, “Every radio and television station is talking about school board races. We’ve never seen that.”

Justice said that “hundreds and hundreds” of their members were running for school board positions nationwide.

Reported in: NBC News, July 17, 2022; Business Insider, July 18, 2022; WFTS, July 20, 2022; Newsweek, November 3, 2022.

Connecticut

On May 10, Governor Ned Lamont signed SB 6 into law, making Connecticut the fifth state with an omnibus data privacy law. It is scheduled to go into effect on July 1, 2023.

Following the mold of those who came before it, Connecticut’s law applies to those who control or process personal data of at least either 100,000 consumers (excluding data processed solely for purposes of transacting payments) or 25,000 consumers if they derived more than 25% of their gross revenue from selling personal data.

The act protects both personally identifiable information and sensitive data, including race, ethnicity, religion, mental or physical health, sexual orientation, citizenship, immigration status, identifying biometric or genetic data, and precise geolocation data.

The law grants consumers the right to correct inaccuracies in their personal data, delete their personal data, and obtain a copy of their personal data in a form that is portable and easily transferable. The law also grants consumers the right to opt out of the use of their personal data for targeting advertising, sale, or “profiling in furtherance of solely automated decisions that produce legal or similarly significant effects” for the consumer.

The law also places a number of restrictions on data controllers, including minimizing data collected, avoiding secondary use without the consumer’s consent, taking reasonable measures to maintain data security and protect consumer confidentiality, processing sensitive data without consent, and providing “reasonably accessible, clear, and meaningful privacy notices” to consumers.

The Connecticut attorney general has the exclusive authority to enforce violations of the privacy act.

Reported in: JD Supra, May 5, 2022.

Florida

The Florida Department of Education’s rejection of 54 math textbooks under recently passed legislation restricting instructional material and school library books, inspired activist Chaz Stevens to target the Bible using the same law.

As of April 27, Stevens had filed requests for the reconsideration of the Bible in 63 school districts, citing HB 1467 as grounds for its removal.

On the request forms, he highlighted its depictions of bestiality, cannibalism, “eye-popping passages of babies being smashed against the rocks,” and its “strong pro-slavery position.” The requests also include the question, “Do we really want to teach our youth about drunken orgies?”

While many will view Stevens’ efforts as amounting to nothing more



than a political prank, legal scholars believe they may have real world impact.

“This stunt is going to illuminate,” said University of Dayton Law School professor Erica Goldberg. “Many of our First Amendment rights get meted out by edge cases or by people looking to make statements.”

HB 1467 bans texts that are “pornographic,” “not suited to student needs,” or which are not age-appropriate from school libraries, classrooms, and reading lists.

Goldberg said that the Bible is rife with murder, torture, rape, incest, dismemberment, and is at least as sexually explicit as books which have been challenged and removed from school libraries.

Catherine Ross, a law professor at George Washington University, said the law as it applies to curriculum is on solid footing. However, its constitutionality with regards to school libraries is far more dubious.

Ross points to the plurality decision in the Supreme Court case *Island Trees Board of Education v. Pico*, 457 U.S. 853 (1982), “that local school boards may not remove books from school library shelves simply because they dislike the ideas contained in those books and seek by their removal to ‘prescribe what shall be orthodox in politics, nationalism, religion, or other matters of opinion.’”

In Florida and across the nation, book challenges and bans have disproportionately been targeting works about the lived experiences of individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+), and/or as Black, indigenous, or people of color.

According to Goldberg, Stevens’s requests may result in school boards engaging in “viewpoint discrimination” if they remove some materials meeting certain criteria and not others.

Stevens said that he has received notification from two of the districts he petitioned to remove the Bible that his requests were rejected because he did not reside within the district. Stevens is recruiting people throughout the state to aid him on his quest.

(See: Journal of Intellectual Freedom and Privacy, v.7 iss.2: *For the Record: Florida*)

Reported in: *The Washington Post*, April 28, 2022.

On May 16, governor Ron DeSantis signed a bill making it a second-degree misdemeanor to picket or protest outside of a private residence. Those who violate the law may face up to 60 days in jail and a \$500 fine.

DeSantis said the law was intended to prevent protests in Florida like those that took place outside of US Supreme Court justices’ homes in Washington, DC, after an opinion draft indicating the Court would overturn *Roe v. Wade* was published.

Those opposed to the law argued that it violates First Amendment rights to assemble and speak freely.

Francesca Menes, co-founder of the Black Collective, a Florida-based social justice organization, said in a statement that “The right to peaceful protest is a bedrock American principle that should never be undermined.”

Menes said that Black communities have used the freedom to assemble “to bring about meaningful change for generations.” She added that the new law “builds on the unconstitutional foundations of the anti-protest bill last year and only reaffirms our will to make sure our voices are heard in order to create a brighter future for the people of our state.”

Reported in: *The Washington Post*, May 17, 2022.

Missouri

On June 30, Governor Michael Parson signed SB 775 into law with an effective date of August 28, 2022. The new law makes it a class A misdemeanor for someone affiliated with a public or private school to provide sexually explicit material to students while acting in their official capacity. Violating it is punishable by up to a year in jail and/or a \$2,000 fine.

The Comic Book Legal Defense Fund (CBLDF), stated that “the main issue [with the law] is that it criminalizes protected speech. In this case, graphic novels that would otherwise be protected.

Explicit sexual material is defined in the bill as “any pictorial, three-dimensional, or visual depiction, including any photography, film, video, picture, or computer-generated image, showing human masturbation, deviant sexual intercourse . . . sexual intercourse, direct physical stimulation of genitals, sadomasochistic abuse, or emphasizing the depiction of postpubertal human genitals.”

The bill includes the proviso “that works of art, when taken as a whole, that have serious artistic significance, or works of anthropological significance, or materials used in science courses, including but not limited to materials used in biology, anatomy, physiology, and sexual education classes shall not be deemed to be within the foregoing definition.”

Nonetheless, in the wake of the bills passing, schools across the state began removing graphic novels from the shelves and withdrawing them from their collections to avoid potential criminal prosecution.

In their analysis of the bill, CBLDF determined that “it is in place solely to intimidate and control the material in the school system. It is unlikely legislators believe this will ever be tested in court. It diminishes our freedoms, cuts



off access to materials for those who need it, and sows fear among school districts.”

State senator Rick Brattin, one of the state senators who authored the bill, implied that this sort of fear-driven censorship was its intent.

“Every single person in the school district is potentially liable,” said state senator Rick Brattin, who helped author the bill. “It will be school boards. It’ll be teachers. It’ll be everyone having to comb through to make sure that they’re not presenting this to kids.”

He cited three books as examples of those he considers “pornographic” and in need of removal: *Gender Queer: A Memoir* by Maia Kobabe, *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic* by Alison Bechdel, and *Dead End* by Jason Myers.

CBLDF expressed concerns that the bill would be used to target materials representing the lived experiences of those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+). Two of the three titles mentioned by Brattin are memoirs by LGBTQIA+ authors.

Brattin also said he’d initially wanted the bill to be more encompassing and target written as well as pictorial depictions, but legislators ultimately formed consensus on targeting visual material.

The impact of that decision was almost immediately evident. Even before the bill went into effect, schools began withdrawing graphic novel adaptations of novels such as *The Handmaid’s Tale*, *American Gods*, and *1984* while retaining the original versions.

On August 9, the Missouri Association of School Librarians (MASL) released a statement encouraging all school librarians to become familiar with the language of SB 775 and reaffirming their commitment to the American Library Association’s (ALA) Freedom to Read statement and the Library Bill of Rights.

MASL urged any school librarian who faces a book challenge to contact their Intellectual Freedom Committee and ALA’s Office for Intellectual Freedom. Their statement also stressed the importance of thoughtfully-crafted and board-approved selection and reconsideration policies in place.

Reported in: Missouri Association of School Librarians, August 9, 2022; KSDK, August 15, 2022; Comic Book Legal Defense Fund, September 30, 2022, and October 7, 2022.

Texas

When Texas A&M University reorganized its library system this spring, 28 librarians lost their tenure or tenure-track status. The change came as state legislators were threatening tenure generally and libraries specifically (*see: Journal of Intellectual Freedom and Privacy, v.7 iss.2: For the Record: Texas, and v.6 iss.4: For the Record: Texas*).

The official change followed meetings between university administrators and librarians from January through April. Associate vice president Kelly Brown said, “This effort is meant to streamline and merge the libraries to update and simplify operations.”

Librarians who wanted to maintain their tenure/tenure-track status were required to find new departments to work in. According to interim dean of university libraries Julie Mosbo Ballastro, not all faculty were accepted into new departments.

Going forwards, faculty librarians will work at most 70% of their time in university libraries.

Of the 77 library staff who held tenure or tenure-track positions, 24 found new departments; 28 gave up their tenure status so they could continue to work in university libraries full-time.

Reported in: *Houston Chronicle*, May 24, 2022.

Osprey, Florida

Zander Moricz, the openly gay president of his graduating class at Pine View School, is a plaintiff against the state of Florida over the Parental Rights in Education Act commonly known as the “Don’t Say Gay” law. (*See: Journal of Intellectual Freedom and Privacy, v.7 iss.2: For the Record: Florida*).

Two weeks before he delivered his graduation speech, Moricz was instructed by his principal not to refer to “my activism or role as a plaintiff in the lawsuit, school administration had a signal to cut off my microphone.”

Moricz said it was dehumanizing to be stripped of the words and language he identifies with, but he was undeterred. “I had to find a way to be clever to discuss who I was.” In a moment of inspiration, he landed on the idea of referring to his curly hair instead of his sexual identity.

“As you know, I have curly hair,” said Moricz. “There are going to be so many kids with curly hair who need a community like Pine View and they will not have one. Instead, they’ll try to fix themselves so that they can exist in Florida’s humid climate.”

Pine View School approved Moricz’s use of euphemism prior to the delivery of his speech.

Moricz began studying government at Harvard University in the fall.

Reported in: ABC News, May 23, 2022.

Seminole County, Florida

On May 9, students of the Lyman High School were supposed to receive their yearbooks, but the school canceled their distribution because they included photos of students protesting the Parental Rights in Education Act commonly known as the “Don’t Say Gay” law. (*See: Journal of Intellectual Freedom and Privacy, v.7 iss.2: For the Record: Florida*).

Principal Michael Hunter issued a statement indicating that “the pictures



and descriptions that depicted this event did not meet school board policy.” Hunter explained, “we have elected to cover the material that is out of compliance . . . so that yearbooks can be distributed as soon as possible.”

The photos that needed to be covered included students holding rainbow flags and a “love is love” sign.

Students almost immediately began a social media campaign called “stop the stickers” to protest the censorship.

On May 10, the school board voted unanimously not to cover over the yearbook images, and students celebrated this as a victory.

When the yearbooks were distributed on May 13, they included stickers bearing this disclaimer: “The events of the student walkout on March 3, 2022, as depicted on this page, were not school or SCPS District initiated, endorsed, or sponsored. The captions, voiced by students, documents the student-led protest in response to HB 1557, Parental Rights in Education.”

Additionally, quotation marks were added around a photo caption that read “showing love is love and being gay is okay,” and a teacher’s name was removed from another caption.

Reported in: WESH, May 9, 2022, and May 13, 2022.

Forest Hills, Ohio

On June 21, the Forest Hills school board voted 3-2 to pass a resolution banning critical race theory, intersectionality, gender identity, sexuality, and anti-racism curriculum from student instruction and staff training.

The resolution was a late addition to the meeting agenda. During the public comments section of the meeting, 23 people spoke in opposition to the resolution and only 1 spoke in support of it. Those who opposed it said it would silence students of color and foster intolerance.

Social studies teacher Stacey Bailey said the resolution “will sweep vulnerable students into the shadows” and “it will make some of those who are starting to like themselves, like themselves a little bit less.”

Sophomore C.J. Hastings put it more bluntly, stating “What is the opposite of anti-racism curriculum? Racism curriculum.”

Others expressed concerns that the resolution gave the board too much control over curriculum and classroom discussion.

On June 24, two lawyers sent a letter to the board threatening legal action if they did not rescind the resolution. Nicole and Kelly Lundrigan are both parents in the district. In their letter, they wrote, “We will not sit idly by while you trample the Constitutional rights of students and teachers and destroy this school system.”

They held the resolution is “vague and overbroad” and that it is “race-conscious and race-based on its face, subjecting it to strict scrutiny under the Fourteenth Amendment, which it will not pass.”

The Lundrigans also wrote that the resolution “promotes racism by prohibiting curriculum which teaches that racism is illegal as well as morally wrong, and has no legitimate place in any public school classroom in the United States.”

On June 29, seven parents and six students of the Forest Hills School District filed a federal lawsuit against the district’s board of education. One of the parents is also a district teacher.

The lawsuit alleges that the resolution is an “unconstitutional race-based and content-based restriction which violates the First and Fourteenth Amendments.” It also holds that the resolution’s “vague, overbroad, race-based and viewpoint discriminatory provisions impermissibly invade upon, among other things, students’ First

Amendment right to receive information and free speech, educators’ First Amendment right of free speech and academic freedom, and the Equal Protection clause.”

The plaintiffs request that the court declare the resolution is unconstitutional and bar it from being enforced.

Reported in: Cincinnati Enquirer, June 22, 2022, and June 27, 2022; WVXU, June 29, 2022.

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

On July 18, staff of the Metropolitan Library System were told by administrators that they cannot help patrons seeking information about abortion services or face jail time and a \$10,000 fine.

Staff were also informed that the library’s internet filtering software would be used to prevent patrons from using library computers to access information about abortion.

A copy of the email that was sent to staff was shared on July 19 in a now-deleted Reddit post.

This rollout of this policy followed the passage of Oklahoma SB 1503, a near total abortion ban, “enforced exclusively through a private civil action.” Both SB 1503 and HB 4327, another near-total abortion ban, were signed by Governor J. Kevin Stitt in May.

They were allowed to go into effect when the June 24 decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization* overturned *Roe v. Wade*.

(See: this issue: *From the Bench: Supreme Court*).

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom Challenge Reports.

Bedford County, Virginia

On July 20, in the wake of a recent spate of book challenges from members of Moms for Liberty, Bedford County Public Schools (BCPS) announced that parents will receive automatic



notifications of every book their children check out from school libraries starting in the fall semester.

Such incursions on readers' privacy run contrary to the principles of intellectual freedom. The American Library Association (ALA) affirms that library users of all ages have a right to privacy and that students should be able to read and borrow library materials free from scrutiny.

ALA's website states that "Privacy is essential for free inquiry because it

enables library users to select, access, and consider information and ideas without fear of embarrassment, judgment, punishment, or ostracism." It notes that the possibility of surveillance undermines a democratic society.

BCPS also announced that lists of secondary classroom texts will now be included as part of teachers' syllabi. Finally, the district's form to request reconsideration of instructional material was updated to make it "more user-friendly."

All of the books that were challenged at BCPS in 2021 and 2022 were retained. This prompted veiled threats and accusations of bias from state representative Marcus Hill.

(See: *Journal of Intellectual Freedom and Privacy*, v.7 iss.1: *Success Stories: Schools: Bedford, Virginia*.)

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report; *The Lynchburg News & Advance*, July 20, 2022.



SCHOOLS Costa Mesa, California

During the public comments section of the May 17 board meeting for the North Mesa Unified School District, a group of parents expressed outrage over the mistaken belief that the graphic novel *Flamer* by Mike Curato was in elementary school libraries.

Prior to the meeting, Henry Abraham had shared photos of pages from the book with the Facebook group Newport-Mesa Uncensored and asked parents to petition the board to remove the book. Abraham started the group to monitor board candidates and “hold them accountable.”

During the meeting, Superintendent Wes Smith said “We have an obligation to make sure that the material in our libraries is age-appropriate . . . If there is some suggestion that it isn’t, we’re obligated to act immediately to close the library to search for those books.”

On June 1, spokesperson Annette Franco stated all elementary school libraries would be closed so officials could conduct a thorough search for any titles that were not age-appropriate. Franco also confirmed that no copies of *Flamer* were ever held in district elementary school libraries.

The district also announced they would be reviewing the process used to order and approve library materials. Abraham said the district was not doing enough and that she was looking for candidates to run against the four school board incumbents up for re-election in November.

Reported in: *Daily Pilot*, June 4.

Weld County, Colorado

On May 21, an online petition to remove four books from libraries of the University Schools charter school in Greeley-Evans School District 6 was started: *All Boys Aren’t Blue: A Memoir-Manifesto* by George M. Johnson, *Gender Queer: A Memoir* by Maia

Kobabe, *Lawn Boy* by Jonathan Evison, and *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison.

The Bluest Eye, however, was not held in any University Schools library. The petition also included photos of pages from *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas, but did not call for its removal or otherwise mention it. The petition received 307 signatures. The district serves more than 22,000 students.

On May 26, high school principal Jeff Casey responded to the petition, thanking all for their concern and referring them to the library’s selection and reconsideration procedures governing formal requests for the removal of library material.

Casey also invited the petition’s creators and signatories to call or email him directly if they wished to discuss school library or instructional materials. Neither the petition’s creators nor signatories attempted to contact school administrators or board members, however two parents submitted requests for the reconsideration of *Gender Queer*.

On June 15, a review committee voted to relocate *Gender Queer* from the high school library to the professional development collection, which requires parental permission for students to access.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report, *Greeley Tribune*, May 29, 2022

Brevard County, Florida

In response to passage of HB 1467, the Brevard County School District (BCSD) ended access to the Epic! Kids’ Books & Reading app and the online math game Prodigy (see: Journal of Intellectual Freedom and Privacy, v.7 iss.2: *For the Record: Florida*).

District spokesperson Russell Bruhn said the district felt they could no longer provide access due to the new oversight requirements implemented by the law. Bruhn said they lacked the

capability to vet the more than 40,000 titles included in Epic.

Teachers and parents alike were surprised and frustrated by the announcement. Teachers said the services engaged young learners and that students used them for supplemental learning after class. While the district was able to provide them at no charge, parents will now have to pay monthly fees for their children to access them.

Tasmin Wright, a mother of two BCSD students, said her youngest daughter used Epic daily. “Whatever she was into, if it was animals, she would type in ‘animals’ and she would just go crazy devouring all these books about chickens and bunnies and farm animals.”

Wright characterized the books in Epic as being “appropriate almost to the point of being childish.” The app is intended for children age 12 and under.

Reported in: *Florida Today*, May 4, 2022.

Sarasota County, Florida

During the public comments section of the May 3 board meeting for Sarasota County Schools (SCS), the chair of the local Moms for Liberty chapter read an excerpt from *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison. Another person in attendance read an excerpt from *Sold* by Patricia McCormick.

Formal requests for reconsideration of the books weren’t filed, but they were still pulled for review by superintendent Brennan Asplen. The books were returned to the shelves within 48 hours.

On July 1, resident Robert Louis Craft filed an emergency injunction requesting a judge to order law enforcement to remove a list of 51 titles including *The Bluest Eye* and *Sold* from SCS and calling for a grand jury investigation.

In his filing, Craft referred to the books as “sexually explicit” and “child



rape materials.” The titles he challenged were primarily works with characters who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+) and/or as Black, indigenous, or people of color. A biography of Michelle Obama was included in his list.

Craft included criminal allegations against Asplen and members of the school board in his filing.

Daniel DeLeo, attorney for the school board, referred to the lawsuit as “a ridiculous document full of sovereign citizen pseudo-law and nonsense, making improper and baseless claims.”

Titles challenged through legal proceedings:

- *47* by Walter Mosley
- *A Court of Mist and Fury* by Sarah J. Maas
- *A Good Kind of Trouble* by Lisa Moore Ramée
- *All Boys Aren't Blue: A Memoir-Manifesto* by George M. Johnson
- *Better Nate Than Ever* by Tim Federle
- *Beyond Magenta: Transgender Teens Speak Out* by Susan Kuklin
- *City of Thieves* by David Benioff
- *Class Act* by Jerry Craft
- *Drama* by Raina Telgemeier
- *Five, Six, Seven, Nate!* by Tim Federle
- *Flamer* by Mike Curato
- *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic* by Alison Bechdel
- *Gender Queer: A Memoir* by Maia Kobabe
- *Ghost Boys* by Jewell Parker Rhodes
- *Girls Like Us* by Gail Giles
- *Go With the Flow* by Karen SchneeMann
- *Ground Zero* by Alan Gratz
- *How to be an Antiracist* by Ibram X. Kendi
- *I Am Jazz* by Jessica Herthel and Jazz Jennings
- *It's Perfectly Normal* by Robie H. Harris
- *Jack of Hearts (and Other Parts)* by L.C. Rosen
- *King and the Dragonflies* by Kacen Callender
- *L8r, G8r* by Lauren Myracle
- *Last Night at the Telegraph Club* by Malinda Lo
- *Lawn Boy* by Jonathan Evison
- *Me and Earl and the Dying Girl* by Jesse Andrews
- *Melissa* (previously published as *George*) by Alex Gino
- *Michelle Obama: Political Icon* by Heather Schwartz
- *Milk and Honey* by Rupi Kaur
- *Monday's Not Coming* by Tiffany Jackson
- *More Happy Than Not* by Adam Silvera
- *New Kid* by Jerry Craft
- *Not My Idea: A Book About Whiteness* by Anastasia Higginbotham
- *On the Bright Side, I'm Now the Girlfriend of a Sex God* by Louise Rennison
- *Out of Darkness* by Ashley Hope Pérez
- *Salvage the Bones* by Jesmyn Ward
- *So You've Been Publicly Shamed* by Jon Ronson
- *Sold* by Patricia McCormick
- *Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You* by Jason Reynolds and Ibram X. Kendi
- *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison
- *The Breakaways* by Cathy G. Johnson
- *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini
- *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* by Stephen Chbosky
- *This One Summer* by Jillian Tamaki and Mariko Tamaki
- *We Are the Ants* by Shaun David Hutchinson
- *We Rise, We Resist, We Raise Our Voices* by Wade Hudson and Cheryl Willis Hudson
- *Weird Girl and What's His Name* by Meagan Brothers
- *What Girls Are Made Of* by Elana K. Arnold
- *When Wilma Rudolph Played Basketball* by Mark Weakland
- *White Bird* by R.J. Palacio
- *Woke: A Young Poet's Call to Justice* by Mahogany Browne, Elizabeth Acevedo, and Jason Reynolds

Reported in: *Patch*, July 3, 2022; *WUSE*, July 25, 2022.

St. Johns County, Florida

On May 24, the board of the St. Johns County School District (SJCS) voted 3-2 to retain seven titles about racism, sexism, and the lived experiences of people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+) and/or Black, indigenous, or people of color.

These books are part of a group of 56 titles challenged at SJCS by Moms for Liberty members. On March 30, a review committee recommended retaining these titles. That decision was appealed to the school board.

These are the titles retained:

- *All Boys Aren't Blue: A Memoir-Manifesto* by George M. Johnson
- *Boys Will Be Boys: Power, Patriarchy, and Toxic Masculinity* by Clementine Ford
- *Ho'onani: Hula Warrior* by Heather Gale
- *Me and White Supremacy* by Layla F. Saad
- *My Rainbow* by Trinity Neal
- *Peanut Goes for the Gold* by Jonathan Van Ness
- *White Privilege* by M.T. Blakemore

On May 31, a review committee recommended retaining *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* by Stephen Chbosky and retaining the following titles with restrictions on students' access to them:

- *Lucky* by Alice Sebold—restricted to grades 11 and 12 with a content warning



- *Sold* by Patricia McCormick—restricted to grades 8 and up
- *The Breakaways* by Cathy G. Johnson—restricted to grades 6 and up
- *Thirteen Reasons Why* by Jay Asher—restricted to grades 8 and up with a content warning

In August, the board voted on appeals to these review committee recommendations and three others that hadn't previously been reported. The decisions from May 31 were all upheld by a vote of 3-2. Additionally, they voted 3-2 to retain the following books (any restrictions applied are noted):

- *A Court of Frost and Starlight* by Sarah J. Maas—parental permission required for checkout
- *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison
- *This Book is Anti-Racist* by Tiffany Jewell

The board members who voted against retaining the challenge material in all cases were Bev Slough and Kelly Barrera.

The remaining 41 titles which have been challenged were not reported.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report, *News4Jax*, May 24, 2022, *St. Augustine Record*.

Nampa, Idaho

On May 10, all librarians in the Nampa School District were sent an email from the district office informing them that during their May 9 meeting, the board voted 3-2 “to forego the book review process and to permanently remove 24 books from our libraries and classrooms.”

The librarians were instructed to box up all copies of the titles lists and send them to a warehouse. One of the titles was listed twice in the email and one of the titles listed had already been withdrawn as the result of a prior challenge.

Most of the books targeted were about the lived experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+) people and/or those who are Black, indigenous, or persons of color.

The books' removal was prompted by a complaint from the parent of a middle school student who alleged the books were pornographic and that distributing them to minors was a violation of state law.

Newly elected board members representing groups including the Idaho Freedom Foundation and Parent 2 Parent are believed to have driven the effort to forgo the district's official reconsideration policy.

During their June 14 meeting, the board discussed what to do with the books now that they were stored in a warehouse. Nampa High School teacher Shelby Dewsnap urged them to return the books to school libraries.

“All of our students deserve safety and representation; you are not providing that,” said Dewsnap. “Go through a process, learn what you can, and then . . . reverse your book ban.”

On August 11, the ACLU of Idaho issued a press release asserting “the trustees may have violated the First Amendment . . . when they voted in May 10 [sic] to permanently remove 22 books from school libraries and classrooms.” They urged the district to return the books to the library shelves.

Aadika Singh, legal director for the ACLU of Idaho, said they were considering a lawsuit to “force the school district through litigation . . . to return these books to the shelves or at least undertake a thorough unbiased process.”

The board discussed revising their reconsideration policy during its September 12 meeting.

The titles withdrawn district-wide were:

- *33 Snowfish* by Adam Rapp
- *A Court of Mist and Fury* by Sarah J. Maas
- *City of Heavenly Fire* by Cassandra Clare
- *Clockwork Princess* by Cassandra Clare
- *Crank* by Ellen Hopkins
- *Drama* by Raina Telgemeier
- *Eleanor & Park* by Rainbow Rowell
- *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* by Jonathan Safran Foer
- *It's Perfectly Normal* by Robie H. Harris
- *L8r, G8r* by Lauren Myracle
- *Lawn Boy* by Jonathan Evison
- *Leah On the Offbeat* by Becky Albertalli
- *Looking for Alaska* by John Green
- *Out of Darkness* by Ashley Hope Pérez
- *Prince and the Dressmaker* by Jen Wang
- *Sold* by Patricia McCormick
- *Speak* by Laurie Halse Anderson
- *The 57 Bus: A True Story of Two Teenagers and the Crime that Changed Their Lives* by Dashka Slater
- *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* by Sherman Alexie
- *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison
- *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood
- *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini
- *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* by Stephen Chbosky
- *Thirteen Reasons Why* by Jay Asher

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report; KTVB7, May 11, 2022, and June 18, 2022; Boise State Public Radio News, July 7; KIVI, August 13, 2022; Idaho Ed News, September 8, 2022.

Covington, Louisiana

On May 24, Kimberly Gardner, assistant superintendent for St. Tammany Parish Public Schools, sent a robocall to parents of fifth grade students in schools receiving Title 1 funding to



notify them that the summer reading backpacks their children received contained *Shaping the Debate: Defining and Discussing Free Speech* by Christy Mihaly.

The robocall was made in response to complaints received from parents that the book on the First Amendment had a liberal bias for covering the “Bong Hits 4 Jesus” Supreme Court case (551 U.S. 393), Colin Kaepernick kneeling during the national anthem in protest of racial injustice, and Russian protest punk group Pussy Riot.

The call informed parents that some may consider the contents of the book to be sensitive, encouraged them to review the book before giving it to their child, and let them know it was not part of the curriculum and no one would be tested on it.

District spokesperson Angela Daviston said that the books were purchased as a package and not specifically selected by the district.

Reported in: NOLA.com, May 26, 2022.

Gorham, Maine

On March 18, Gorham School District (GSD) received a request for reconsideration of *All Boys Aren't Blue: A Memoir-Manifesto* by George M. Johnson from a community member who does not have a child at the high school. The complainant said, “I find this book to be blatantly pornographic and incestuous.”

The complainant also filed a request for the reconsideration of *The Handmaid's Tale (graphic novel)* by Margaret Atwood and Renee Nault.

Separately, at the May 11 board meeting for GSD, superintendent Heather Perry received multiple requests to remove a “Gender 101” poster from classrooms. The poster defines terms including cisgender, transgender, and non-binary.

When the request to reconsider the poster was received, Perry informed the

complainant about the district’s process for resolving the request, the first step of which was for them to meet and discuss the issue. The complainant refused to meet with Perry and wrote that he objects “to the process of finding a resolution with the perpetrator of a crime against me.”

Perry informed him she would not pursue his complaint as he was unwilling to follow district procedures. She said that if he was unhappy with this outcome, he could appeal the decision to the board.

Another parent and a grandparent also submitted requests for the reconsideration of the poster, arguing that posters on “straight sexuality” and “genders assigned at birth” should also be in classrooms.

Perry stated this claim was inaccurate as the Gender 101 poster included all genders and sexual orientations.

The outcomes of these challenges are unknown.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report; *Portland Press Herald*, May 25, 2022; June 22, 2022.

Carroll County, Maryland

On June 6, the board of Carroll County Public Schools voted 4-1 to prohibit the display of Pride flags and other “political flags” on school property. The decision came following hours of testimony, including from current students.

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+) students, parents, and other community members who supported inclusivity wore shirts to the meeting proclaiming “Acceptance Empowers.”

The agenda item was added after some staff members complained that they felt pressured to support the LGBTQIA+ community by a donation of rainbow flags from the national advocacy group PFLAG.

Dr. J.D. Murphy, whose children attend district schools, stated that LGBTQIA+ children are often bullied and are more likely to be suicidal. “We need to affirm these children. We need to support them. We need to normalize them. We need to be inclusive,” said Murphy.

A parent who objected to the display of Pride flags told the board that “over-sexualizing the classroom” was unacceptable. Another expressed their belief that the flags encouraged discussion of topics that were not age appropriate.

Under the new policy, flags displayed in classrooms are limited to the American flag; the Maryland flag; the Carroll County flag; flags denoting recognition of achievement; sport tournament banners; banners for college, university, and professional sports teams; and flags representing the many nations of the world, so long as they are smaller and less prominent than the American flag.

Students are still allowed to display Pride flags on their clothing.

Reported in: WBFF, June 8, 2022.

Davison County, North Carolina

During the public comments section of the May 2 meeting of the Davidson County Schools (DCS) board of education, a number of people expressed concerns about certain titles available from school libraries.

Resident Polly Leonard read an excerpt from Nobel laureate Toni Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye* and then stated, “This is pure pedophilia.”

Leonard said a group of parents have assembled a five page spreadsheet listing books they consider to be explicit. Commissioner Chris Elliott requested a copy of the spreadsheet, then declared that she believed several of the titles included were “against the law.”

The only other publicly disclosed title from the spreadsheet is *It’s*



Perfectly Normal by Robie H. Harris. It is unknown if any action was taken regarding the titles on the list.

On May 5, it was reported that DCS was suspending their participation in the statewide Battle of the Books competition. Superintendent Emily Lipe said DCS paused participation over concerns about the content of some of the books.

North Carolina School Library Media Association selects the titles and organizes the statewide competition annually. Students from participating schools read books from a list and then compete in quiz show tournaments to test their knowledge of the books.

Lipes did not specify which titles resulted in DCS withdrawing from the tournament. Several titles included in the high school and middle school lists have been challenged as part of a nationwide movement targeting library books about the lives and experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+) individuals, as well as those who are Black, indigenous, or people of color.

Books on the 2022–2023 middle school Battle of the Books list that have been challenged at other school districts include:

- *Black Brother, Black Brother* by Jewell Parker Rhodes
- *I am Malala* by Malala Yousafzai
- *The Shape of Thunder* by Jasmine Warga

Books on the 2022–2023 high school Battle of the Books list that have been challenged at other school districts include:

- *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe* by Benjamin Alire Saenz
- *Last Night at the Telegraph Club* by Malinda Lo

- *The 57 Bus: A True Story of Two Teenagers and the Crime that Changed Their Lives* by Dashka Slater
- *The Field Guide to the North American Teenager* by Ben Philippe

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge reports; *The High Point Enterprise*, May 3, 2022; WGHP, May 5, 2022.

Moore County, North Carolina

In April, Moore County Schools board member Philip Holmes initiated three more requests for reconsideration of school library books: *The Alchemist: A Fable about Following Your Dream* by Paulo Coelho, *Life is Funny* by E.R. Frank, and *Looking for Alaska* by John Green. Holmes initiated a request to remove *Out of Darkness* by Ashley Hope Pérez earlier in the school year.

Holmes was also one of the board members who voted for the removal of *Melissa* (previously published as *George*) by Alex Gino when it was challenged. The majority of the board voted to retain it, however (see: Journal of Intellectual Freedom and Privacy, v.7 iss.2: *Success Stories: Schools: Moore County, North Carolina*).

Out of Darkness, *Life is Funny*, and *The Alchemist* were withdrawn. *Looking for Alaska* remains available at one of the district's high school libraries.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report; *The Pilot*, May 13, 2022; July 12, 2022.

Multnomah County, Oregon

On July 1, a patron requested that the Multnomah County Library withdraw the July/August 2022 issue of *Rolling Stone*, as they felt the cover objectified women.

Library staff reviewed the material and determined it was aligned with their collection policy. The patron was

notified the library would retain the issue on July 19.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Fairview, Pennsylvania

On June 1, *Broad + Liberty* reported that Fairview School District had withdrawn the title *Gender Queer: A Memoir* by Maia Kobabe without following the district policy, which requires review of challenged material by a committee of professionals.

In an email, superintendent Erik Kincade stated that it was the first time during his 16 year tenure that a book had been challenged in the district. He said that he personally reviewed the book after receiving a complaint form a parent, and determined it should be removed based on some graphic images.

On July 11, the National Coalition Against Censorship (NCAC) sent a letter to the district board drawing their attention to the superintendent's apparent breach of district policy. NCAC urged the district to return *Gender Queer* to the library and follow the formal review process called for in their policies.

Reported in: *Broad + Liberty*, June 1, 2022; National Coalition Against Censorship, July 11, 2022.

Kutztown, Pennsylvania

At their May 16 meeting, the Kutztown Area School District's board of directors approved a motion by a vote of 5–4 to require a signed parental permission form for any student to check *Gender Queer: A Memoir* by Maia Kobabe out of the high school library. At the time the vote was held, no one had checked the book out from the library. No other book in the library requires parental approval.

Board members Caecilia Holt, Al Darion, Michael Hess, and Dennis Ritter opposed the restriction. Ritter stated that he had actually read the



book, unlike those who were characterizing it as obscene.

Darion stated it was ironic that in Pennsylvania “a 16-year-old can consent to have sex, but needs parental permission to read about it.” He said that “sounds a little inconsistent to me on a practical basis.”

During the public comments section of the meeting, Robyn Underwood expressed dismay over the board’s decision. “If parents would like to manage their own children and leave my children out of it, they’re welcome to do so,” said Underwood.

Community member Dan Wismer voiced his concerns about critical race theory and diversity, equity, and inclusion. He then objected to the American Library Association (ALA) “deciding the curriculum for schools” and blamed ALA for the district’s purchase of *Gender Queer*.

James Koch then referred to ALA as “a Marxist organization.”

Reported in: Kutztown Area School District Board of Directors Meeting Minutes, May 16, 2022; Reading Eagle, May 20, 2022.

Newtown, Pennsylvania

During the March 14 board meeting of the Council Rock School District, board member Bob Hickey spoke out against library material he felt was inappropriate and proposed numerous ways his concerns could be addressed.

“I would like to see major changes to what our kids are allowed to see in school,” said Hickey. He recommended adopting a ratings system such as the Motion Picture Association of America uses for movies. He also proposed requiring parent permission for students to access “certain books.”

Proposals to amend district policy 109, which governs the reconsideration of instructional and library material, were also made.

The policy changes were discussed by the district’s policy committee during their March 14 meeting.

District parent Chris Kinsey voiced staunch opposition to the proposed changes. “The creep of right-wing extremist politics into schools that we’ve been reading about in the news seems to be coming into our own community,” said Kinsey. “We will not let our schools become petri-dishes for open racism, bullying, bigotry, or fascist ideology.”

During the April 7 board meeting, parents and students pushed back against the district making any changes along the lines of what Hickey had proposed. Anne Murray characterized proposals to ban books, such as those brought by Texas Representative Matt Krause, as efforts “to disrupt small communities” and “put their name on the map.” (See: *Journal of Intellectual Freedom and Privacy, v.6 iss.4: For the Record: Texas*).

Concurrently, a district parent began submitting forms requesting the reconsideration of 35 titles frequently challenged by members of Moms for Liberty.

A preponderance of the books are about the lived experiences of those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+) or Black, indigenous, or people of color.

A review committee recommended that the first book to be challenged, *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic* by Alison Bechdel, be retained at the high school level. On June 16, the acting superintendent overrode the committee and ordered the removal of the book.

These are the additional titles that have been challenged at the Council Rock School District:

- *Almost Perfect* by Brian Katcher
- *Beautiful* by Amy Reed

- *Beyond Magenta: Transgender Teens Speak Out* by Susan Kuklin
- *Burned* by Ellen Hopkins
- *Crank* by Ellen Hopkins
- *Damsel* by Elana K. Arnold
- *Fallout* by Ellen Hopkins
- *Forever* by Judy Blume
- *Gabi, a Girl in Pieces* by Isabel Quintero
- *Glass* by Ellen Hopkins
- *Go Ask Alice!* by Anonymous
- *Hooked* by Catherine Greenman
- *I’ll Give You the Sun* by Jandy Nelson
- *Identical* by Ellen Hopkins
- *Impulse* by Ellen Hopkins
- *Jesus Land: A Memoir* by Julia Scheeres
- *Living Dead Girl* by Elizabeth Scott
- *Lucky* by Alice Sebold
- *Milk and Honey* by Rupi Kaur
- *Monday’s Not Coming* by Tiffany Jackson
- *Out of Darkness* by Ashley Hope Pérez
- *Perfect* by Ellen Hopkins
- *Red, White & Royal Blue: A Novel* by Casey McQuiston
- *Rumble* by Ellen Hopkins
- *Scars* by C.A. Rainfield
- *Slaughterhouse-Five, or, The Children’s Crusade: A Duty-Dance with Death* by Kurt Vonnegut
- *Smoke* by Ellen Hopkins
- *Sold* by Patricia McCormick
- *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison
- *The Handmaid’s Tale* by Margaret Atwood
- *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* by Stephen Chbosky
- *Tilt* by Ellen Hopkins
- *Tricks* by Ellen Hopkins
- *Water for Elephants* by Sara Gruen

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report; *The Centurion*, May 12, 2022.



Greenville County, South Carolina

On March 10, the Greenville County School District received a request for the reconsideration of *Melissa* (previously published as *George*) by Alex Gino. The complainant stated their belief that “transgender material is not age appropriate for . . . school children of any age.”

The complaint was submitted by the parent of a child at the A.J. Whittenberg Elementary School. At the time the complaint was submitted, *Melissa* was held by libraries in six elementary schools, six middle schools, and one high school in the district. It was not used as part of the curriculum for any grade level.

After reviewing the book and the complaint, the district’s elementary material review committee met on April 20. They voted to retain the book in elementary and middle school libraries, but restrict access to children in grades 5 and up.

At their May 24 board meeting, the district’s trustees voted 10-2 to withdraw the book from elementary school libraries and require parental approval for middle school students to check it out.

The board also voted to send a letter to state lawmakers requesting that publishers provide ratings for books and descriptions of any controversial content they contain.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report; WSPA, May 24, 2022.

Rapid City, South Dakota

On June 7, the Rapid City Area Schools (RCAS) board of education voted unanimously to delay their decision on destroying five titles purchased for use as part of the 12th grade English curriculum.

Officially, the decision was delayed so the board could receive advice from

legal counsel. Board member Troy Carr added the delay to the agenda to allow “for more discussion on the process of how the books got picked” for destruction.

The books were selected by teachers from Rapid City’s three public high schools and approved by a committee. The books arrived in May 2021.

On June 8, 2021, four new board members were elected. Their campaigns received funding from the Family Heritage Alliance, the Free Republic Political Action Committee, and/or the Shining Light PAC.

In August 2021, all copies of the five titles were warehoused. Valerie Seales, district director of teaching, learning, and innovation, sent an email to superintendent Lori Simon stating that “I think some English teachers are going to want to fight this fight to keep the books. I am taking the stance that they are inappropriate and we will not use them for assigned or voluntary reading list[s].”

Simon then sent an email to principals stating “Now more than ever, what curriculum and resources/books we use will be subject to public scrutiny. Let’s avoid issues proactively.”

The district then reviewed the books that were approved during the previous board’s tenure a second time. They decided to remove five of the titles, including some that were currently being taught.

The plan to destroy the books, many of which had never been read, was first publicly discussed during the district’s May 3 board meeting. At the meeting, the books were declared “pornographic” and, according to the board, likely in violation of South Dakota Codified Law 22-24-27, which prohibits the distribution of sexually explicit material that is “without serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value” to minors.

Before their June 6 meeting, the board circulated a new policy that read

“Parental/guardian knowledge and consent if required for ALL LGBTQ/gender identity related discussions, handouts, videos, or online/printed materials except in mandatory reporting situations.”

During the meeting, a local pastor who was invited to speak by the board, condemned children who identify as trans.

On June 16, high school English teacher Timmi Bubac resigned, saying “I’m tired of the fear-based decision-making.”

The novels slated for destruction:

- *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic* by Alison Bechdel—35 copies
- *Girl, Woman, Other* by Bernardine Evaristo—30 copies
- *How Beautiful We Were* by Imbolo Mbue—185 copies
- *The Circle* by David Eggers—30 copies
- *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* by Stephen Chbosky—75 copies

On November 8, the RCAS board voted to sell three of the titles instead of destroying them: *How Beautiful We Were*; *Girl, Woman, Other*; and *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*.

The copies of *The Circle* and *Fun Home* were missing from the warehouse when district staff attempted to locate them in August. RCAS interim chief executive officer Nicole Swigart said it was possible the books were sold at auction.

Reported in: Rapid City Journal, June 3, 2022, July 8, 2022, and November 9, 2022; The Washington Post, June 24, 2022.

Sumner County, Tennessee

In November, 2021, Portland High School principal David Woods informed Jennifer Heyboer and Vickie Baker, the two librarians, that the



graphic novel adaptation of *The Handmaid's Tale* by Maragret Atwood and Renee Nault was unacceptable in a high school library.

Woods instructed the librarians to review every graphic novel in the collection for anything “questionable.”

Heyboer reminded Woods of the district’s reconsideration policy and asked if he’d read *The Handmaid’s Tale*. He said he had not and that page 30 was all he needed to see.

Baker and Heyboer reviewed every graphic novel in the collection and flagged any instance of nudity with a post-it note. Woods instructed every book identified to be withdrawn.

Baker also pulled graphic novels for other reasons, including violence, profanity, and the depiction of guns. Additionally, Baker was the one who initially brought *The Handmaid’s Tale* graphic novel to Woods’s attention.

When Heyboer submitted a purchase order for books in March, she received a note from Woods instructing her to remove three titles from it: *Slaughterhouse-Five, or the Children’s Crusade: A Duty-Dance with Death* by Kurt Vonnegut, *Summer in the City of Roses* by Michelle Ruiz Keil, and *This is Where it Ends* by Marieke Nijkamp.

Woods informed Heyboer that books would only be ordered if both librarians agreed. Baker had expressed concerns that Common Sense Media indicated these titles had violence and/or sexual content.

Graphic novels challenged and withdrawn in this case:

- *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* [graphic novel] by Tse Po
- *Action Comics Annual. No. 4, 1992. The Evil of Eclipso vs. the Power of Shazam!* by Dan Vado
- *Dante’s Divine Comedy* by Seymour Chwast
- *Dare to Disappoint: Growing up in Turkey* by Özge Samancı

- *Deogratias, a Tale of Rwanda* by Jean-Philippe Stassen
- *Guerillas. Volume 1* by Brahm Revel
- *Guerillas. Volume 2* by Brahm Revel
- *Hunter x Hunter. Volume 3* by Yoshihiro Togashi
- *Inuyasha: A Feudal Fairy Tale* by Rumiko Takahashi
- *Kindred: A Graphic Novel Adaptation* by Damian Duffy, Danez Smith
- *Little Nemo’s Big New Dreams* by Josh O’Neill
- *Long Way Down: The Graphic Novel* by Jason Reynolds
- *Maids* by Katie Skelly
- *Miss Peregrine’s Home for Peculiar Children: The Graphic Novel* by Ransom Riggs
- *My Hero Academia. 13: A Talk About Your Quirk* by Kōhei Horikoshi
- *My Hero Academia: Vigilantes*. [Series] by Hideyuki Furuhashi
- *Naruto* by Masashi Kishimoto
- *Nubia, Real One* by L.L. McKinney
- *Shirley Jackson’s The Lottery: The Authorized Graphic Adaptation* by Myles Hyman
- *Slaughterhouse-Five, or the Children’s Crusade: A Duty-Dance with Death, a Graphic Novel Adaptation* by Ryan North
- *Speak: The Graphic Novel* by Laurie Halse Anderson
- *Squad* by Maggie Tokuda-Hall
- *The Handmaid’s Tale (graphic novel)* by Margaret Atwood and Renee Nault

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Frisco, Texas

During their June 13 board meeting, the Frisco Independent School District (ISD) updated their policies governing how they handle the reconsideration of library materials.

Under the new policy, it is now possible for a book to be removed from the collection based on a single sentence. Previously, books were considered on

their merits as a whole. The district is also working to update their administrative guidelines regarding the selection of library materials.

The policy revisions came in the wake of repeated calls from two residents for Frisco ISD to remove library materials they consider to be obscene. State representative Jared Patterson has also been critical of the district’s libraries on social media, where he called for the removal of every book included on a target list compiled by state representative Matt Krause (see: *Journal of Intellectual Freedom and Privacy, v.6 iss.4: For the Record: Texas*).

In addition to withdrawing seven titles from high school libraries and one title from middle school libraries, the district also withdrew the magazine *Kirkus Reviews*, a professional book review publication used by librarians to aid in the selection of material.

At the meeting, it was stated that *Kirkus* was being withdrawn because all the books challenged at the district received positive reviews in it.

Book titles withdrawn from Frisco ISD libraries:

- *Blue is the Warmest Color* by Julie Maroh
- *Jack of Hearts (and Other Parts)* by L.C. Rosen
- *Milk and Honey* by Rupi Kaur
- *Sex is a Funny Word* by Cory Silverberg
- *Trans Mission: My Quest to a Beard* by Alex Bertie
- *Triangles* by Ellen Hopkins
- *What Girls Are Made Of* by Elana K. Arnold

An additional title was also challenged at the district, but its title was not reported.

Reported in: Frisco Enterprise, June 22, 2022.



Houston, Texas

During the May 9 board meeting of the Cypress Fairbanks Independent School District (ISD), parent Monica Dean requested a notification system that would alert parents whenever one of their children attempted to check out a book from the school library and give them the option of approving or rejecting the book's circulation.

On June 9, it was reported that 11 titles had been challenged in the school district. Four of them were removed because they were included on a "watch list" distributed by state representative Matt Krause sent to every Texas school district on October 25, 2021 (See: Journal of Intellectual Freedom and Privacy, v.6 iss.4: For the Record: Texas).

The books that were withdrawn for their inclusion on the Krause list were: *Bend, Don't Shatter: Poets on the Beginning of Desire* edited by T. Cole Rachel, *Gender Queer: A Memoir* by Maia Kobabe, *The Breakaways* by Cathy G. Johnson, and *This Book is Gay* by Juno Dawson.

An additional five titles were removed because they had been challenged in other Texas school districts. Those titles were: *Forbidden* by Tabitha Suzuma, *Forever for a Year* by B.T. Gottfred, *Jack of Hearts (and Other Parts)* by L.C. Rosen, *The Nerdy and the Dirty* by B.T. Gottfred, and *What Girls Are Made Of* by Elana K. Arnold.

After undergoing the prescribed review process, *A Long Walk to Water* by Linda Sue Park was retained. Against the odds, *Flamer* by Mike Curato was also retained, despite appearing in both Krause's list and several other challenges at Texas school districts.

Reported in: Community Impact, June 9, 2022.

Richardson, Texas

During the September 20, 2021, board meeting for the Richardson Independent School District (RISD), parent Sherry Clemens voiced complaints

about a book that contained profanity which was on an optional reading list for a junior high school gifted and talented English language arts class.

The book Clemens objected to was *All American Boys* by Jason Reynolds and Brendan Kiely. After the meeting, RISD reviewed the list and instructed two titles to be removed from junior high school classrooms: *Burn Baby Burn* by Meg Medina and *Everybody Sees the Ants* by A.S. King. Students who were currently reading those titles were allowed to finish them if their parents approved.

Following this, Clemens and other parents started making Facebook posts containing excerpts from books they considered to be pornographic. Early in 2022, one of those posts started receiving a significant amount of attention. The post consisted of a warning and included a list of 17 titles in RISD libraries.

Most of the titles on the list deal with issues of race and racism and the lives of those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+). The list included *All American Boys* as well as the two books RISD already removed from junior high school classrooms.

The list of books and book banning generally were discussed by school board candidates during the April 10 RISD district 2 forum.

All titles challenged in this case:

- *All American Boys* by Jason Reynolds and Brendan Kiely
- *All Boys Aren't Blue: A Memoir-Manifesto* by George M. Johnson
- *Burn Baby Burn* by Meg Medina
- *Class Act* by Jerry Craft
- *Every Day* by David Levithan
- *Everybody Sees the Ants* by A.S. King
- *Far from the Tree* by Robin Benway
- *Felix Ever After* by Kacen Callender

- *Fighting Words* by Kimberly Brubaker Bradley
- *Flamer* by Mike Curato
- *Gender Queer: A Memoir* by Maia Kobabe
- *How it Went Down* by Kekla Magoon
- *Lawn Boy* by Jonathan Evison
- *Melissa* (previously published as *George*) by Alex Gino
- *On The Come Up* by Angie Thomas
- *Parachutes* by Kelly Yang
- *Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You* by Jason Reynolds and Ibram X. Kendi

Reported in: Lake Highlands Advocate, May 4, 2022.

Canaan, Vermont

In March, a group of parents submitted requests for Canaan Schools to remove three titles from their libraries. The titles were not part of any curriculum, but all of them deal with the lives and experiences of people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+).

The movement to challenge the books was led by Ashlie Lynch, whose daughter is in sixth grade. On one of the reconsideration forms she submitted, Lynch that "sexual orientation should not be taught or promoted to students."

A review committee was formed in April to make recommendations regarding the challenged titles.

They determined that *Heather Has Two Mommies* by Lesléa Newman was appropriate for all grade levels. They voted to keep *A Quick & Easy Guide to Queer & Trans Identities* by Mady G. in the high school library where it was shelved. They recommended removing *How to be Ace: A Memoir of Growing Up Asexual* by Rebecca Burgess until the school board rendered a verdict.

On May 9, the school board voted to retain all three titles.



Karen Conroy, superintendent of the Essex North Supervisory Union, said these were the only challenges to library material she could remember taking place during her 25 year tenure.

Lynch was undaunted by the outcome and said she would continue to work to get LGBTQIA+ books removed from school libraries.

Reported in: VT Digger, May 12, 2022.

Fauquier County, Virginia

During the July 11 board meeting for Fauquier County Public Schools (FCPS), Moms for Liberty members demanded the removal of a list of 46 books from school libraries, claiming they had sexually explicit content.

The books they targeted ranged from children's picture books to young adult fantasy novels. Most of them are about the lives and experiences of people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+) and/or as Black, indigenous, or people of color.

Many in attendance spoke out in opposition to the proposed book bans. Resident Mary Brown Haak said that reading books from other perspectives is "the best way to gain insight into the lives and challenges facing others."

Margareta Grady said that removing books on the experiences of marginalized populations would do harm to students who belong to those groups. Grady also highlighted the need to trust professional educators.

On July 6, it was reported that three additional titles had been challenged by the Fauquier County chapter of Moms for Liberty. Amie Bowman, the chapter's treasurer, said they exceeded their June membership goal by 25%. Members were working to submit requests for reconsideration of their targeted titles at each of the high schools in the district.

On August 26, it was reported that Moms for Liberty members had submitted requests for reconsideration of nine additional titles at FCPS schools.

District policy dictates that titles will remain available for circulation while undergoing review.

During their September 12 meeting, the FCPS board announced they would be revising their collection and reconsideration policies, in response both to the spate of challenges they've received and the passage of SB 656 (See: Journal of Intellectual Freedom and Privacy, v.7 iss.2: For the Record: Virginia).

The outcomes of the sundry requests for reconsideration at FCPS remain unknown.

Titles challenged in this case:

- *A Bike Like Sergio's* by Maribeth Boelts
- *A Boy Called Bat* by Elana K. Arnold
- *A Court of Mist and Fury* by Sarah J. Maas
- *A Court of Thorns and Roses* by Sarah J. Maas
- *A Quick & Easy Guide to Queer & Trans Identities* by Mady G
- *A Song Only I Can Hear* by Barry Jonsberg
- *A Splash of Red: The Life and Art of Horace Pippin* by Jen Bryant
- *Ace of Spades* by Faridah Àbíké-Íyímídé
- *Alex as Well* by Alyssa Brugman
- *Almost Perfect* by Brian Katcher
- *An Ocean Apart, A World Away* by Lensey Namioka
- *Ana on the Edge* by A.J. Sass
- *Be Gay, Do Comics* by Matt Bors
- *Brown: The Last Discovery of America* by Richard Rodriguez
- *City of Thieves* by David Benioff
- *Crane* by Jeff Stone
- *Crank* by Ellen Hopkins
- *Deogratias, a Tale of Rwanda* by Jean-Philippe Stassen
- *Dress Codes for Small Towns* by Courtney C Stevens
- *Eleanor & Park* by Rainbow Rowell
- *Fade* by Lisa McMann
- *Fever Crumb* by Philip Reeve
- *Flamer* by Mike Curato
- *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic* by Alison Bechdel
- *Gender Identity: The Ultimate Teen Guide* by Cynthia Winfield
- *Girl Mans Up* by M-E Girard
- *Girls Like Us* by Gail Giles
- *Grasshopper Jungle* by Andrew Smith
- *I Am Jazz* by Jessica Herthel and Jazz Jennings
- *Image and Identity: Becoming the Person You Are* by Kris Gowen
- *Ironhead, or, Once a Young Lady* by Jean-Claude van Rijckeghem
- *Last Night at the Telegraph Club* by Malinda Lo
- *Lobizona* by Romina Gerber
- *Looking for Alaska* by John Green
- *Milk and Honey* by Rupi Kaur
- *More Happy Than Not* by Adam Silvera
- *Nineteen Minutes* by Jodi Picoult
- *One Half from the East* by Nadia Hashimi
- *Out of Darkness* by Ashley Hope Pérez
- *Ramona Blue* by Julie Murphy
- *Rethinking Normal: A Memoir in Transition* by Katie Rain Hill
- *Rick* by Alex Gino
- *Ruin of Stars* by Linsey Miller
- *Scavenge the Stars* by Tara Sim
- *Seeing Gender: An Illustrated Guide to Identity and Expression* by Iris Gottlieb
- *So You've Been Publicly Shamed* by Jon Ronson
- *Sold* by Patricia McCormick
- *The Deep & Dark Blue* by Niki Smith
- *The Full Spectrum: A New Generation of Writing About Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning, and Other Identities* by David Levithan
- *The Goldsmith's Daughter* by Tanya Landman
- *The Hazards of Love. Book 1, Bright World* by Stan Stanley



- *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini
- *The Mermaid, the Witch, and the Sea* by Maggie Tokuda-Hall
- *The Polar Bear Explorers' Club* by Alex Bell
- *This One Summer* by Jillian Tamaki and Mariko Tamaki
- *We Are the Ants* by Shaun David Hutchinson
- *What Girls Are Made Of* by Elana K. Arnold
- *Wildthorn* by Jane Eagland

Reported in: *Fauquier Now*, July 13, 2022; WUSA, July 14, 2022; *Fauquier Times*, July 6, July 13, 2022, and August 26, 2022; WTOP, September 15, 2022.

Frederick County, Virginia

A group of parents expressed concerns over the content of some library books during the public comments section of the May 3 board meeting for Frederick County Public Schools. Other parents in attendance decried the calls to remove books as acts of intolerable censorship.

School board member Miles Adkins characterized the library books discussed as “vile” and “disgusting” and stated he was “ashamed that they’re in our school.”

At the October 12 school board meeting, Cindy Rose, who is running for the board on the Education Not Indoctrination slate, submitted a list of 35 titles and called for their immediate removal from district libraries.

Rose used the website Rated Books to compile her list. She read excerpts from two of the books she was challenging, then told the board members she would hold them “personally responsible for allowing child pornography to be made available to our children using our tax dollars.”

The board’s curriculum and instruction committee is scheduled to discuss the books on Rose’s list in December. They will also discuss *Gender Queer*:

A Memoir by Maia Kobabe, which the board had also received several challenges for. A single copy of *Gender Queer* was ordered for the district. It has not yet made it to the shelves.

Titles challenged in this case:

- *A Court of Frost and Starlight* by Sarah J. Maas
- *A Court of Mist and Fury* by Sarah J. Maas
- *A Court of Silver Flames* by Sarah J. Maas
- *A Court of Thorns and Roses* by Sarah J. Maas
- *A Court of Wings and Ruin* by Sarah J. Maas
- *All Boys Aren't Blue: A Memoir-Manifesto* by George M. Johnson
- *Breathless* by Jennifer Niven
- *Confess* by Colleen Hoover
- *Crank* by Ellen Hopkins
- *Damsel* by Elena K. Arnold
- *Deogratias, a Tale of Rwanda* by Jean-Philippe Stassen
- *Empire of Storms* by Sarah J. Maas
- *Forever* by Judy Blume
- *Forever for a Year* by B.T. Gottfred
- *Gender Queer: A Memoir* by Maia Kobabe
- *I Never* by Laura Hopper
- *Identical* by Ellen Hopkins
- *Infamous* by Elana K. Arnold
- *It's Perfectly Normal* by Robie H. Harris
- *Jack of Hearts (and Other Parts)* by L.C. Rosen
- *Jesus Land: A Memoir* by Julia Scheeres
- *Kingdom of Ash* by Sarah J. Maas
- *Lawn Boy* by Jonathan Evison
- *Let's Talk About It: The Teen's Guide to Sex, Relationships, and Being a Human* by Erika Moen
- *Living Dead Girl* by Elizabeth Scott
- *Lucky* by Alice Sebold
- *Milk and Honey* by Rupi Kaur
- *My Friend Dahmer* by Derf Backderf
- *Normal People: A Novel* by Sally Rooney

- *People Kill People* by Ellen Hopkins
- *Push* by Sapphire
- *S.E.X.: The All-You-Need-To-Know Progressive Sexuality Guide to Get You Through High School* by Heather Corinna
- *Slaughterhouse-Five, or the Children's Crusade: A Duty-Dance with Death, a Graphic Novel Adaptation* by Ryan North
- *Sold* by Patricia McCormick
- *Triangles* by Ellen Hopkins
- *Tricks* by Ellen Hopkins

Reported in: *The Winchester Star*, May 5, 2022; *The Frederick News-Post*, October 14, 2022.

Roanoke County, Virginia

In November, the award-winning picture book *When Aidan Became a Brother* by Kyle Lukoff was formally challenged at Horn Elementary School, part of Roanoke County Public Schools (RCPS). The book’s titular character is Black and transgender.

A committee of librarians from elementary, middle, and high school libraries in the district reviewed the request and the book and determined it should remain in the collection.

This decision was appealed to a committee of three community members: one selected by the parent who challenged the book, one selected by the school’s principal, and one selected by the other two committee members from a list of candidates provided by an RCPS board member.

The appeals committee determined the book should be relocated from the school library to the guidance counselor’s office where it would only be made accessible to parents.

Following the implementation of access restrictions to the title, RCPS spokesperson Chuck Lionberger announced they would be revising their school library selection policy, their reconsideration process, and



their teacher guidelines for classroom discussions.

On June 23, the board voted unanimously to approve a restrictive new selection policy. Before any book can be added to a district elementary school library, two elementary librarians must read it and write reviews of it. After which, every elementary school librarian must agree to add the title. For middle and high school libraries, only one librarian is required to read and review each book, but unanimous consent from librarians of the respective school level is still required.

After a book is approved, the title will be published to give district parents two weeks to review it and raise objections. Following the vote, board member Cheryl Facciani said the policy was why she and other board members were elected last November.

The ACLU of Virginia stated on social media that the new policy placed “an absurd burden . . . on school librarians” and was “a tactic of censorship.”

At the meeting, district parent Laura Bowman chastised the board for their prejudice and cowardice. “Imagine a school board that exhibited such deeply ingrained fear, bias, and prejudice through its policymaking that it hurt the children it claimed to care about and was supposed to be serving. I don’t have to imagine it. I’m looking right at it.”

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report; *The Roanoke Times*, May 29, 2022, and June 23, 2022.

Spotsylvania County, Virginia

In early May, the parent of a Spotsylvania County Public Schools (SCPS) student submitted requests for the reconsideration of eight high school library books.

Most of the books challenged are about the lived experiences of people

who identify as Black, indigenous, or people of color and/or as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+).

A committee of SCPS staff, parents, and community members determined that all eight were appropriate for high school students and should remain in school libraries.

The parent appealed the committee’s decision to the superintendent and the school board. At previous board meetings, chair Kirk Twigg declared that he intends to “clear out our libraries,” and made headlines nationwide when he said he wants to burn all the books they remove (*see: Journal of Intellectual Freedom and Privacy, v.7 iss.1: Censorship Dateline: Schools: Spotsylvania, Virginia*).

The outcome of the appeal is unknown.

Titles challenged:

- *All Boys Aren’t Blue: A Memoir-Manifesto* by George M. Johnson
- *America* by E.R. Frank
- *Beloved* by Toni Morrison
- *Dime* by E.R. Frank
- *Like a Love Story* by Abdi Nazemian
- *Looking for Alaska* by John Green
- *Out of Darkness* by Ashley Hope Pérez
- *Sold* by Patricia McCormick

The outcome of the appeal is unknown

Reported in: *The Fredericksburg Free Lance-Star*, May 26, 2022.

Muskego, Wisconsin

On June 13, the Muskego-Norway Schools board’s Educational Services Committee, which is composed of three members of the board, rejected the use of *When the Emperor was Divine* by Julie Otsuka in the 10th grade accelerated English curriculum. They said the award-winning novel lacked balance in its portrayal of the internment of Japanese Americans during WWII.

Newly-elected board member Laurie Kontney, who ran on a platform opposing critical race theory, derided the book as “diverse” and “divisive.”

The decision prompted outcry from residents and advocacy groups. Resident Ann Zielke, said there is “no need for this type of false balance or both-sides-ism in telling the story of Japanese internment. The American government was wrong and has apologized for the racism that led to Japanese internment.”

The national nonprofit group Japanese American Citizens League sent a letter to the school board calling on them to reconsider their decision. The statement concludes: “The story of what happened to the Japanese American community is an American story, one that balances the challenges of injustice, but also the patriotic stories of service and resistance. If anything, these are stories that need to be told more in our schools.”

Reported in: *Wisconsin Examiner*, June 22, 2022.

Oconomowoc, Wisconsin

In June, Alexandra Schweitzer, president of the local chapter of No Left Turn in Education, became embroiled in legal action regarding four titles she alleged were age-inappropriate and available from Oconomowoc Area School District libraries.

The books challenged by Schweitzer all include representation of individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+):

- *Are You a Boy or Are You a Girl?* by Sarah Savage
- *It’s Perfectly Normal* by Robie H. Harris
- *The 57 Bus: A True Story of Two Teenagers and the Crime that Changed Their Lives* by Dashka Slater
- *The Gender Quest Workbook: A Guide for Teens & Young Adults Exploring*



Gender Identity by Rylan Jay Testa, Deborah Coolhart, and Jayme Peta

Schweitzer first spoke out against the books in February during a hearing of the Wisconsin Senate Committee on Education. The school district's attorneys said the books have not been available since Schweitzer made her comments and that they are not being used in classrooms.

Schweitzer published statements about the district inappropriately providing access to the books in May on No Left Turn in Education's website. The district responded by threatening a defamation lawsuit.

Wisconsin Institute for Law and Liberty (WILL) is representing Schweitzer. The conservative law firm previously pressured the Elmbrook School District not to provide physical or electronic access to LGBTQIA+ titles (*see: Journal of Intellectual Freedom and Privacy, v.6 iss.3: Censorship Dateline: Schools: Brookfield, Wisconsin*).

Reported in: Fox News, June 19, 2022; *Oconomowoc Enterprise*, June 21, 2022.

LIBRARIES Colchester, Connecticut

On June 27, Mayor Andreas Bisbikos posted on Facebook that he had ordered staff of the Cragin Memorial Library to remove *Who is RuPaul?* by Nico Medina and review the rest of their children's materials. The title was part of a Pride display at the library. Bisbikos said he received a complaint from a parent about it.

Bisbikos ended his post with the directive, "We encourage parents that come across any materials in the children's section that may be deemed questionable, to bring it to the attention of the library staff immediately."

Library director Kate Byroade responded by informing Bisbikos that the library had a policy in place

governing challenges to materials and the policy would be followed.

On June 29, the library received an official request to reconsider the title. This resulted in the book being checked out for internal review.

On July 7, the board voted down Bibikos's directive for staff to individually review the more than 20,000 titles in the children's collection. They said it would be too time-consuming of an undertaking and that instead, staff would review any materials they received requests to reconsider.

Bibikos felt this was a mistake and said, "I pray to God that there are no further books that are highly questionable in that library."

After review, the library retained *Who is RuPaul?* in the children's collection.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report; *Hartford Courant*, June 29, 2022; *NBC Connecticut*, July 8, 2022.

Boundary County, Idaho

Efforts to recall four out of five members of the Boundary County Library Board were initiated by a group called Boundary County Library Board Recall in mid-July.

The group formed after the board voted 3-1 to update the library's Materials Selection and Collection Development Policy on June 16.

The revision added a statement that the board "recognizes that given the increasing emphasis on frankness and realism of materials including those that explore social, sexual, and ethical issues, some members of the community may consider some materials to be controversial and/or offensive."

The updated policy continues that "selection of materials will not be affected by any such potential disapproval and the Boundary County Library will not place materials on

'closed shelves' or label items to protect the public from their content."

The one board member who wasn't present for the vote worked on the changes and was included in the recall initiative because he did not go on record as being opposed to the revisions.

The website of the group set on recalling the board identifies their mission as "to protect children from explicit materials and grooming." In addition to that dog whistle, it includes documents specifically opposed to library materials with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+) characters and themes.

On social media, the group expressed objections to Marxism and to board members' perceived intent "to bring LGBTQ+ and social justice propaganda to affiliated libraries." The group pointed to the library's involvement with the American Library Association (ALA) as "a method to bring morally bankrupt materials to our children's minds and eyes."

Approximately 130 members of the group were turned away from the library's July board meeting, as there was not sufficient room to accommodate them in the Armory building where the meetings are held.

On August 16, library director Kimber Glidden announced her resignation effective September 10. In her public statement, she said "Nothing in my background could have prepared me for the political atmosphere of extremism, militant Christian fundamentalism, intimidation tactics, and threatening behavior currently being employed in the community."

She stated that while she had not received specific threats, she had experienced threatening behavior and that "bizarre, threatening biblical quotes" had been directed at her,



such as “repent of wanting to harm our children.”

Members of the Bonners Ferry Police Department and Boundary County Sheriff’s Office were on hand for the August 18 board meeting to help keep the meeting peaceful. About an hour into the meeting, an attendee blew a shofar, a traditional Hebrew goat horn historically used as a call to battle.

NBC News reported that the group had challenged more than 400 titles, primarily young adult books with LGBTQIA+ characters. The Boundary County Library did not own any of the books the group objected to.

This is a complete list of the titles targeted on the recall group’s website:

- *All Boys Aren’t Blue: A Memoir-Manifesto* by George M. Johnson
- *Dreaming in Cuban* by Cristina Garcia
- *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic* by Alison Bechdel
- *Gender Queer: A Memoir* by Maia Kobabe
- *Identical* by Ellen Hopkins
- *It’s Perfectly Normal* by Robie H. Harris
- *Let’s Talk About It: The Teens’ Guide to Sex, Relationships, and Being a Human* by Erika Moen
- *Rise Up!: How You Can Join the Fight Against White Supremacy* by Crystal Fleming
- *The ABC’s of LGBT+* by Ashley Mardell
- *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* by Stephen Chbosky
- *The Pronoun Book* by Chris Ayala-Kronos
- *This is Our Rainbow: 16 Stories of Her, Him, Them, and Us* by Katherine Locke

Reported in: *Bonners Ferry Herald*, July 14, 2022, August 18, 2022, and August 19, 2022; August 19, 2022; *NBC News*, August 23, 2022.

Lafayette, Louisiana

On May 31, the Lafayette Public Library announced a new policy forbidding displays on specific segments of the population, including Pride Month, Black History Month, Women’s History Month, and any displays on native American history, or cajun heritage.

The policy went into effect shortly before Pride Month began. Cutting to the quick, library manager Cora Chance observed that “This is absolutely an LGBTQ issue.” She noted that the only displays the board had previously attempted to prevent or remove were Pride displays.

Library Director Danny Gillane said the policy was put in place to help protect the library’s collections, as putting such materials on display feels “like I am inviting people to challenge these books.”

Lynette Mejía, an administrator of the Lafayette Citizens Against Censorship (LCAC) Facebook page, condemned the action. “It goes against everything a library is supposed to stand for,” said Mejía.

LCAC started a petition urging the library to revoke this policy and resume their displays. Mejía said “If you’re not highlighting different cultures . . . and these books are just kind of sitting in the background where they’re not easily found, that makes it harder . . . for people to learn about these things.”

Local advocacy group Move the Mindset is also asking the library to reconsider this policy. In a statement, they said if the library is only displaying “classic texts and traditional genres . . . in reality, it privileges the stories of certain races, classes, ethnicities, genders, and cultures over others.”

In violation of the board’s by-laws, board president Robert Judge refused board member James Thomas’s request to put a discussion about the display policy on the agenda for their June 22 board meeting.

On June 22, prior to the meeting, the Lafayette chapter of the NAACP held a protest and press conference in front of the library in opposition to the display policy.

Around 70 people attended the library board meeting and discussion of the display policy dominated the public comments portion of the meeting. The board took no action on the policy.

Reported in: *The Acadiana Advocate*, May 31, 2022, and June 23, 2022; *KLFY*, June 10, 2022; *KATC*, June 10, 2022.

Frederick County, Maryland

On June 1, Heather Fletcher, a candidate for the Frederick County Public Schools Board of Education, demanded that the Brunswick Branch of Frederick County Public Libraries take down their Pride display or move it to a location where children couldn’t see it.

When staff did not, Fletcher checked out all of the displayed books, following a plan mapped out in *CatholicVote* called “Hide the Pride” (*see: this issue: For the Record: Nationwide*). She also absconded with a cup full of pronoun pins.

Fletcher said she checked the books out to prevent other library patrons from reading them.

Frederick County Public Library issued a statement saying they restocked the display with other books and refreshed their supply of pins. They also explained that the pins were purchased with funds from their Friends group and not paid for with taxpayer dollars.

Fletcher said she would return the books but would not use the library again.

A photo Fletcher shared on social media included some of the books she checked out in protest. The remaining titles aren’t known:

- *David Bowie Made Me Gay: 100 Years of LGBT Music* by Darryl W. Bullock



- *How to Survive a Plague: The Story of How Activists and Scientists Tamed AIDS* by David France
- *Indecent Advances: A Hidden History of True Crime and Prejudice Before Stonewall* by James Polchin
- *Love that Story: Observations from a Gorgeously Queer Life* by Jonathan Van Ness
- *We Are Everywhere: Protest, Power, and Pride in the History of Queer Liberation* by Matthew Riemer and Leighton Brown
- *When Your Child is Gay: What You Need to Know* by Wesley C. Davidson

Reported in: *The Frederick News-Post*, June 2, 2022; *WMAR*, June 3, 2022.

Litchfield, New Hampshire

In observation of Pride Month, the Aaron Cutler Memorial Library created two displays, one in the adult/teen area with a sign proclaiming “Read with Pride.” The display featured a variety of titles related to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+) community.

A second display in the children’s section had a sign reading “Welcome to the Children’s Room” accompanied by titles on non-traditional families and children with non-traditional interests.

On June 6, a library board member requested that library director Vicki Varick remove all Pride signs from the library. The director refused to take them down, as the library has a board-approved reconsideration policy that states materials and displays will not be removed while undergoing review as part of a reconsideration process.

On June 7, the board member came to the library and checked out all of the titles that were part of the adult/teen section, but did not venture downstairs to the children’s display. Later that day, three women came for the books on

the children’s display and checked out the last four that weren’t already in circulation.

News of the books’ removal spread quickly on social media, spurring more than 30 residents to come to the June 13 board meeting. After more than a dozen residents spoke about the display, board member Jennifer Ford made a motion for the board to request that the patron return the books. The motion passed.

Chair Donna Ferguson said, “What that person did was wrong and it is censorship. The library is for everyone and to restrict books is wrong.”

Ferguson said that the issue of the displays was added to the agenda after three residents emailed in protest of the books’ removal, inquiring if the board had a role in the act of censorship, and requesting the board to support Litchfield’s LGBTQIA+ families and individuals.

On June 15, the library shared a post on Facebook with photos of the restored displays and links to lists of LGBTQIA+ titles available through Libby and Hooopla.

Books temporarily removed from Pride displays:

- *A is for Activist* by Innosanto Nagara
- *A Queer History of the United States for Young People* by Michael Bronski
- *A Quick & Easy Guide to Asexuality* by Molly Muldoon
- *Across a Field of Starlight* by Blue Delliquanti
- *All Are Welcome* by Alexandra Penfold
- *D’Vaughn and Kris Plan a Wedding* by Chencia C. Higgins
- *Fred Gets Dressed* by Peter Brown
- *Golden Boys* by Phil Stamper
- *I Think Our Son is Gay. Volume 1* by Mangaka Okura
- *Our Dreams at Dusk: Shimanami Tasogare* by Yuhki Kamatani
- *Peaces* by Helen Oyeyemi

- *Rainbow Revolutionaries: 50 LGBTQ+ People Who Made History* by Sarah Prager
- *Tell Me How to Be* by Neel Patel
- *The City Beautiful* by Aden Polydoros
- *The Henna Wars* by Adiba Jaigirdar
- *Thirsty Mermaids* by Kat Leyh
- *To Paradise* by Hanya Yanagihara
- *Trans Figured: My Journey from Boy to Girl to Woman to Man* by Brian Belovitch
- *We Make it Better: The LGBTQ Community and Their Positive Contributions to Society*

Reported in: *Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report; Manchester Klink*, June 15, 2022.

New Hanover County, North Carolina

On June 21, a Pride storytime event at the Pine Valley Library was disrupted by protestors, including members of the Proud Boys. Pine Valley Library is part of the New Hanover County Public Library system.

The hour-long event featured readings of *Daddy & Dada* by Ryan Brockington and *Heather has Two Mommies* by Leslea Newsum and craft time. The program was for children under 7 and their parents and attendance was limited to those who registered in advance.

Outside the library, protesters carried signs proclaiming “pedophiles are using LGBTQ to groom kids,” “stop supplying pornography to our students,” and “New Hanover County guilty of child abuse.”

At one point, a group of seven to eight Proud Boys who were part of the protest entered the library and attempted to gain access to the room in which the storytime event was taking place. They were not allowed entry, but shouted loudly enough for the parents and children attending to hear them.

According to community members Angie Kahney and Ashley Daniels, who



were present at the event and shared photos from it on social media, protesters closed in on the families who attended as they left. Kahney said many fled to their cars and that she saw children crying.

The New Hanover County Sheriff's Office confirmed that demonstrators entered the library and attempted to gain access to the programming room during the Pride storytime event. However, she reported that "after the reading, all the participants left the library with no incident."

Reported in: WHQR, June 22, 2022; Port City Daily, June 22, 2022.

Chillicothe County, Ohio

On June 23, the Chillicothe and Ross County Public Library received a request to reconsider *Miss Rita, Mystery Reader* by Sam Donovan.

In the written complaint, the patron articulated her beliefs that books with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+) characters could not "be accepted in any situation involving a child" and that she "could see someone losing their job over it or worse."

The book was retained at all library locations.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Greenville, South Carolina

On June 22, the chair of the Greenville County Library System (GCLS) called all 12 branches and instructed them to take down their Pride displays. This action was taken in response to complaints received from community members.

This action prompted assistant librarian Victoria Slessman to resign her position at the Simpsonville branch. Slessman said staff were also instructed not to include their pronouns in their email signatures.

Laura Baker resigned from the GCLS board over the issue, stating that the board never voted to remove the displays and that she was not consulted about the decision. She called on board chair Allan Hill and GCLS director Beverly James to resign.

On June 23, the board reversed their decision, according to a joint statement that was released by Upstate SC Pride, Upstate SC LGBT+ Chamber of Commerce, and the American Civil Liberties Union—South Carolina.

On September 12, the Greenville County Republican Party's (GCRP) executive committee unanimously passed a resolution calling on the County Council to investigate who ordered the library Pride displays to be put up. The resolution listed several children's books that they believe promote "transsexuality and LGBTQ ideology to children."

GCRP's resolution also stated that they "formally denounce any and all sexual indoctrination of children in government-funded schools and libraries."

GCRP chairperson Jeff Davis said party members have checked books out of the library and plan to continue to do so in order to prevent them from being displayed.

PFLAG Greenville, issued a statement which noted that LGBTQIA+ people contribute to the tax base and deserve representation in public spaces.

"There are thousands of LGBTQIA+ children across our state and thousands of children with LGBTQIA+ parents," PFLAG said in their statement. "Those children should have unfettered access to books that celebrate the beautiful diversity of humanity and represent their families."

Titles targeted by the GCRP:

- *Daddy and Dada* by Ryan Brockington

- *Generation Brave: The Gen Z Kids Who are Changing the World* by Kate Alexander
- *Heather Has Two Mommies* by Lesléa Newman
- *It's Perfectly Normal* by Robie H. Harris
- *Love, Violet* by Charlotte Sullivan Wild
- *My Fairy Godmother is a Drag Queen* by David Clawson
- *Pride Puppy* by Robin Stevenson
- *Sex is a Funny Word* by Cory Silberberg
- *You Don't Have to be Everything: Poems for Girls Becoming Themselves* by Diana Whitney

Reported in: Greenville News, June 24, 2022; The Post and Courier Greenville, June 25, 2022, and September 17, 2022.

Abilene, Texas

At the June 9 Abilene City Council meeting, a group of people requested restrictions on the availability of books with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+) characters and themes at the Abilene Public Library.

Erica Batten, a homeschooling mother of six, said that materials "dealing with LGBTQ issues" were "not age-appropriate." Batten said the library would not be safe unless those books were kept away from children in another part of the library along with books on "witchcraft and other sensitive topics."

Mayor Anthony Williams gently pushed back, stressing the importance of an inclusive collection, particularly given the higher suicide risk of LGBTQIA+ teens.

Williams said "We do want you, as a public library, to respond to the whole community, and provide a response that allows us to help individuals, especially



our youth, navigate the complexities of this life.”

The library’s reconsideration policy and procedures were discussed as part of the meeting.

The same group came to the July 6 board meeting of the Abilene Public Library, again raising objections to the accessibility of LGBTQIA+ titles.

The group’s objections resulted in the board tabling a draft policy on parental responsibility. The group argued that the library’s board and staff were responsible for protecting children from books the group considered to be inappropriate.

Linda Ingram, focused on one book in particular, characterizing Erika Moen’s *Let’s Talk About It: The Teen’s Guide to Sex, Relationships, and Being a Human* “pornography” and “harmful to children [as] it is primarily used as a grooming tool.”

Moen’s book covers topics including gender, sexuality, anatomy, body image, and safe sex, and was a *Publisher’s Weekly* “best book of 2021,” a best books 2021 selection from the New York Public Library, and included in the Chicago Public Library’s list of “best teen non-fiction of 2021.”

A group of 62 people attended the August 1 meeting. The board approved a policy affirming that it is the responsibility of parents to supervise their children’s library use.

The board also voted to create a three-person committee to review *Let’s Talk About It*, in response to two formal requests for its reconsideration.

The library review committee recommended retaining the title, but moving it from the adult nonfiction section of a branch library to the adult nonfiction section of the main library. The library board voted to support the committee’s recommendation. The city manager, however, determined the book should be removed from the collection.

A list of 28 additional titles have also been challenged by the group, but the result of those challenges is unknown.

All books challenged in this case:

- *A Court of Frost and Starlight* by Sarah J. Maas
- *A Court of Thorns and Roses* by Sarah J. Maas
- *A Court of Wings and Ruin* by Sarah J. Maas
- *All Boys Aren’t Blue: A Memoir-Manifesto* by George M. Johnson
- *And They Lived...* by Steven Salvatore
- *Bumped* by Megan McCafferty
- *Crank* by Ellen Hopkins
- *Damsel* by Elena K. Arnold
- *Flamer* by Mike Curato
- *Foul is Fair* by Hannah Capin
- *Kingdom of Ash* by Sarah J. Maas
- *Lawn Boy* by Jonathan Evison
- *Let’s Talk About It: The Teen’s Guide to Sex, Relationships, and Being a Human* by Erika Moen
- *Lolita* by Vladimir Nabokov
- *My Body is Growing: A Guide for Children, Ages 4 to 8* by Dagmar Geisler
- *Queer: A Graphic History* by Meg-John Barker
- *Red Hood* by Elena K. Arnold
- *Red, White & Royal Blue: A Novel* by Casey McQuiston
- *Slaughterhouse-Five, or, the Children’s Crusade: A Duty-Dance with Death* by Kurt Vonnegut
- *Sold* by Patricia McCormick
- *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison
- *The Handmaid’s Tale (graphic novel)* by Margaret Atwood and Renee Nault
- *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini
- *The Moon Within* by Aida Salazar
- *This Book is Gay* by Juno Dawson
- *Two Boys Kissing* by David Levithan
- *What Girls are Made Of* by Elena K. Arnold
- *Yolk* by Mary H.K. Choi
- *You Too?* by Janet Gurtler

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge reports; Abilene Reporter News, June 9, 2022, July 7, 2022, and August 6, 2022.

Arlington, Texas

On May 23, Arlington city administrators forbade the Arlington Public Library from putting up displays for Pride Month.

On October 6, the library advisory board discussed a proposed update to their display policy that would restrict Pride Month displays to the adult section. After four hours of discussion, the board tabled the vote until the next board meeting.

Board chair Catherine Serna-Horn called the proposal an act of “quiet censorship.”

Board member Zoe Wilkerson said that the existence of people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+) is not political.

The group driving the discussion at the library has also spent more than a year pressuring Mayor Jim Ross to stop proclaiming June Pride Month. Ross adamantly refused and issued the proclamation in June.

Gina Woodlee, who has been protesting against Pride in Arlington since July 2021, said during the meeting that LGBTQIA+ is a “lifestyle . . . whose main goal is to expose our children to sexual content.” She accused those who supported inclusivity in libraries of “grooming” children.

Bennett Reddig, president of the youth library ambassadors said, “I think most of the people there are falling for a manufactured controversy.” He characterized members of the pressure group as “using the platform of this meeting to just spew their hateful rhetoric.”

On October 27, the library board voted 9-1 to create designated LGBTQIA+ sections in the shelving areas for children, teens, and adults,



and to restrict Pride Month displays to the teen and adult sections.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report; KERA, October 7, 2022, and October 28, 2022.

Bedford County, Virginia

On June 14, the Forest Library branch of the Bedford Public Library System (BPLS) moved its Pride Display after receiving complaints from members of the Bedford County chapter of Moms for Liberty.

All the books that had been part of the display were checked out by one individual, following a plan for censoring Pride materials recommended in CatholicVote (*see: this issue: For the*

Record: Nationwide). When the display was replenished, all the books were promptly checked out a second time.

Due to concerns for staff safety raised by spoken and emailed threats, the remainder of the display was moved to a less visible area of the library.

At their July 12 board meeting, people spoke in condemnation of the censorship efforts targeting lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+) materials. Many expressed dismay over the actions which made the library feel less safe and inclusive.

Elizabeth Mansel expressed concerns that attacks targeting a marginalized group were taking place in her community and said it felt like a “slippery

slope.” She also pointed out that removing resources from libraries drives young people to seek answers from sources that are less safe and reliable.

James Jones, a volunteer with the library’s Friends group, said he was deeply concerned by the threats and harassment that were directed at library staff. “Tolerance of others is a sign of a healthy community,” said Jones. “Let our libraries continue to serve us one and all.”

According to Debbie Bahouth, chair of the BPLS board, Pride displays were not targeted at any other library in the system.

Reported in: WSET, June 15, 2022; WSL, July 12, 2022; Lynchburg News and Advance, July 14, 2022.



SCHOOLS Barrington, Illinois

At the June 21 school board meeting for Barrington 220 Community Unit School District, parents protested the inclusion of *Gender Queer: A Memoir* by Maia Kobabe on a list of recommended summer reads that was sent to parents of middle and high school students.

One held up a sign proclaiming “PORN in our schools.” A parent of two grade school children said, “This is exactly [how] I would expect a pedophile to behave when approaching a child to normalize sexual behavior.”

One of the book lists shared was created by the Association of Illinois School Library Educators. The other was a list of recipients of a readers’ choice award voted on by Illinois students.

On June 23, superintendent Robert Hunt announced that Kobabe’s book was being formally reconsidered at the Barrington High School, the only library in the school district where it is held.

Objections to *Gender Queer* also dominated the July 12 board meeting. This time, many attendees spoke out in support of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+) students and their reading interests.

Cook County Commissioner Kevin Morrison, the first openly LGBTQIA+ commissioner in the county, cautioned that these protests were about more than one book and were tied to a nationwide movement.

“The words we’re hearing are not different from what we’re seeing in other parts of the country with anti-LGBTQ legislation that’s being pursued,” said Morrison. “We know that his language is dangerous. It causes violence.”

Requests to reconsider two additional LGBTQIA+ titles were also received, for *This Book is Gay* by Juno Dawson and *Flamer* by Mike Curato.

On August 16, the school board voted to retain *Gender Queer* in the high school library.

On September 20, they voted to retain *Flamer* and *This Book is Gay*.

Reported in: *Daily Herald*, June 24, 2022, and July 14, 2022; WBEZ, September 20, 2022.

Edina, Minnesota

On May 20, the Minnesota Police and Peace Officers Association (MPPOA) sent a letter to the administrators of the Edina Public Schools district, challenging use of the book *Something Happened in Our Town: A Child’s Story About Racial Injustice* by Marianne Celano. They also condemned a school field trip to attend a dramatic adaptation of the book performed at the Minneapolis Children’s Theater.

The book was written by child psychologists to spark conversations about racism, promote acceptance, and help kids process and cope with traumatic events. It tells the story of how two families, one White and one Black, respond to a police shooting of a Black man in their town.

MPPOA alleged that *Something Happened*, “Encourages children to fear police officers as unfair, violent, and racist.” They also claimed the picture book was creating a “staffing crisis” for officer recruitment and retention. They requested that the district discontinue use of the book in elementary schools.

The district informed MPPOA that the book was not assigned reading, though they confirmed the book was read aloud to a fifth grade class in Highland Elementary. They stated that going on the field trip to see the play was optional for families of fourth and fifth grade students.

MPPOA previously challenged *Something Happened* at the Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan school district (see: Journal of Intellectual Freedom and Privacy, v.6

iss. 1: *Censorship Dateline: Schools: Rosemount, Minnesota*).

Reported in: *Hometown Source*, June 15, 2022.

Milford, Ohio

In late April, three parents filed requests for the reconsideration of *In the Time of Butterflies* by Julia Alvarez from Milford Exempted Village School District’s 10th grade English language arts curriculum and from school libraries.

The requests were spurred by a post to a neighborhood Facebook group proclaiming “Our 10th graders are being forced to read this pornography in school!”

In the Time of Butterflies is set in the Dominican Republic in the 1960s and chronicles three sisters’ involvement in the resistance movement against Rafael Leónidas Trujillo dictatorship. It was nominated for the 1994 National Book Critics Circle Award and is a selection of the National Endowment of the Arts’ Big Read program.

One parent alleged that assigning the book “is willingly and knowingly pandering obscenity to minors.”

Another wrote that the book exposes children to “an unhealthy view of sexuality” and “normalizes necromancy” in defiance of Christian beliefs.

A committee of administrators, teachers, and parents read and reviewed the book, in accordance with district policy. They voted unanimously to retain it. Superintendent John Spieser endorsed their decision and the book remains in district school libraries and the 10th grade curriculum.

Reported in: *Cincinnati Enquirer*, May 12, 2022.

Park County, Wyoming

On April 29, an individual without children in the Park County School District requested the formal reconsideration of *The Color Purple* by Alice



Walker. The individual also submitted a request for the reconsideration of *How to be an Antiracist* by Ibram X. Kendi.

The complainant indicated that they were challenging the books on behalf of a group and that they were ready to file complaints against roughly 100 additional titles.

On the reconsideration forms, the complainant characterized *The Color Purple* as “pornographic . . . grooming material” and called *How to be an Antiracist* “non-colorblind” and “Marxist.”

On June 2, the district’s review committee voted 9-0 to retain both books.

Reported in: *Big Horn Radio Network*, May 31, 2022; *Cowboy State Daily*, June 3, 2022.

LIBRARIES Ketchikan, Alaska

On June 2, the city council of Ketchikan voted against canceling a Drag Queen Storytime event scheduled at the Ketchikan Public Library as part of the city’s Pride Month celebrations. During the council meeting, three members of the public spoke in opposition to the event and five spoke in support of it.

According to library director Pat Tully, the half-hour event would feature a drag queen named Luna reading *The Hips of the Drag Queen Go Swish, Swish, Swish* by Lil Miss Hot Mess. The event is intended to foster self-acceptance.

The event was held as scheduled on June 17 and was attended by children of all ages. Tully said it was the best attended storytime the library has ever had. The library had to add two additional readings to accommodate all those in attendance.

In an interview after the event, Luna said Drag Queen Storytimes accomplish two things. “Kids get to come in and have a great time and celebrate Pride . . . kids who maybe have same-sex parents, or gay uncles and aunts, etc.” Luna continued, “at the same time, I think it was an opportunity to prove what

we were doing is more than okay to all those people who thought that it wasn’t.

Also on June 17, former Ketchikan Borough Assembly member John Harrington asked the borough to cut more than half a million dollars in funding to the library over their decision to host a Drag Queen Storytime event. This is equivalent to roughly 40% of the library’s funding.

The city of Ketchikan owns and operates the library, but the borough contributes to its funding through property taxes on homes and businesses outside of city limits. Harrington’s proposal would eliminate all burrough funding.

When the borough declined to take up Harrington’s proposal, he began the petition process to introduce it to the municipal ballot as a citizen initiated measure.

Reported in: KRBD, June 3, 2022, June 17, and June 23, 2022; KTOO, June 18, 2022.

Dixon, Illinois

Throughout the month of June, a group protested the Dixon Public Library’s (DPL) Pride Month display. They sent a form letter from *CatholicVote*’s “hide the Pride” initiative to library director Antony Deter as well as to city officials (*See this issue: For the Record: Nationwide*).

On July 11, more than a hundred community members attended the board meeting of DPL, including members of the conservative group Sauk Valley Freedom Fighters (SVFF). The SVFF members demanded the removal of books with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+) characters.

Some said that library staff should be prosecuted on pornography charges for making the books available to the public.

Roughly half of those who spoke during the public comments section opposed the censorship of library

materials and voiced concerns about discrimination against LGBTQIA+ individuals.

Formal reconsideration requests were submitted for *Gender Queer: A Memoir* by Maia Kobabe and *Patience & Esther: An Edwardian Romance* by Sarah Searle.

Brett Nicklaus, who helped found SVFF and recently lost his bid to be the Republican nomination for state senate in the 37th district, called for the books to not only be removed from the library, but burned.

Fifteen-year old Daxxen Krzykowski referred to the censorship efforts as “blatant homophobia” and said that “banning books is a slippery slope into fascism.”

Bob Balayti countered that this wasn’t homophobia, but a “spiritual war” with the devil.

At their next board meeting on August 8, the library board unanimously approved policy changes strengthening the library’s opposition to censorship and discrimination.

During the meeting, Deter said that 16 requests had been received for the reconsideration of *Gender Queer* and *Patience & Esther* on the grounds of “sin,” “vulgarity,” and “lesbianism.” These requests for reconsideration were the first the library had received in at least seven years.

All of the requests to reconsider the books were denied.

On September 12, Deter presented the library board with sample policies to help the library navigate challenges to displays, like they faced for their Pride Month display.

At the meeting, new board member Piper Grazulis said that *Gender Queer* is pornography, but that it’s also legal under Illinois law. At the meeting, Angie Shippert, who is running for the Lee County Board, said that she plans to appeal her denied request for the reconsideration of *Gender Queer*.



Reported in: *Shaw Local*, July 13, 2022; August 10, 2022; September 9, 2022; September 14, 2022.

Cambridge, Minnesota

Starting in February, the East Central Regional Library began to receive formal requests for the reconsideration of *It's Perfectly Normal* by Robie H. Harris. By May 1, they had received 30 requests, many of which were identical.

The library system has 14 locations in 6 counties and owns 3 copies of the challenged title. After initial review, the title was retained in the childrens' section throughout the library system. One person appealed this decision to the library board for review.

A group of more than 30 people all spoke out against the book during the public comments section of the May 9 board meeting. The formation of a review committee was announced during the meeting, tasked with making a recommendation to the board at their August 8 meeting.

The committee's presentation to the board was postponed until their September 12 meeting. The committee recommended retaining *It's Perfectly Normal* in the children's section. The library board voted 16-1 to adopt their recommendation. Following that, the board voted to not consider additional requests for reconsideration of Harris's book for five years. That motion passed 15-2.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report; *AlphaNews*, May 11, 2022; *Isanti-Chisago County Star*, September 15, 2022.

Portsmouth, Ohio

On June 13, two patrons of the Portsmouth Public Library berated youth services staff over the library's Pride Month display, alleging they were "grooming children" and "promoting pedophilia." They checked out all of the displayed books, in accord with

CatholicVote's "Hide the Pride" campaign (See: this issue: *For the Record: Nationwide*).

One of the patrons responsible for removing the display through brute force circulation contacted the *Scotia County Daily News* about the display and some of the titles on it. On June 16, *Scotia County Daily News* ran a report the library's Pride Month display, focusing on four books that were included:

- *Being You: A First Conversation About Gender* by Megan Madison
- *Mommy, Momma, and Me* by Lesléa Newman
- *Prince and Knight* by Daniel Haack
- *The Every Body Book: The LGBTQ+ Inclusive Guide for Kids About Sex, Gender, Bodies, and Families* by Rachel E. Simon

Numerous people spoke out both in favor of and in opposition to the display during the public comments section of the library's board meeting on June 21. The board said the library does not currently have a policy governing the reconsideration of displays, but that they will seek legal counsel and explore creating one.

The books were never formally challenged and remain available.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report; *Scotia County Daily News*, June 16, 2022; *WSAZ*, June 21, 2022.

Coppell, Texas

In early January, the Cozby Library and Community Commons received a request for the reconsideration of *Gender Queer: A Memoir* by Maia Kobabe.

During their February 10 board meeting, director Dennis Quinn went over the request the library received, the library's collection development policy, and the recommendation from the review committee that the library retain the title in their collection.

Martha Garber, board vice chair, made a motion to accept the recommendation of Quinn and the reconsideration committee to retain the book. The motion failed with a 3-3 vote. Board member Michelle Ostrander then made a motion to withdraw the book, seconded by Matthew Ittoop. That motion also failed with a 3-3 vote.

The reconsideration request was tabled until the March 10 board meeting. In accordance with the library's policy, the title remained available while undergoing review.

On March 10, Ostrander again made a motion to remove the title from the library, seconded by Matthew Ittoop. This time the vote failed by a vote of 4-2, with Haridas Radhakrishnan changing his vote from the February meeting.

Reported in: *Book Riot*, February 8, 2022.

Harris County, Texas

On March 17, the Harris County Public Library (HCPL) received a request for the reconsideration of *A Day in the Life of Marlon Bundo* by Jill Twiss. The book was retained.

On March 22, HCPL received a request to reconsider *Rainbow Shoes* by Tiffany Stone.

The review committee determined that while they did not believe the book should be withdrawn based on the concerns raised in the request, it did meet weeding criteria in the Texas State Library and Archives Commission's CREW weeding manual.

On April 21, a request for reconsideration of *Maiden and Princess* by Daniel Haack was submitted to HCPL. The book was retained.

On May 19, HCPL received a request to reconsider *Worm Loves Worm* by J.J. Austrian and Mike Curato. The book was retained.

Finally, on June 6, a patron submitted a complaint about the library's



Pride Month displays and requested that they be taken down immediately. The library kept the displays up for the rest of the month.

All of the challenges to materials at HCPL pertained to resources for and representations of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+) individuals. The request forms all specifically identified LGBTQIA+ content as the reason for the challenge.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge reports.

Huntsville, Texas

On May 3, Huntsville city officials met with Rachel McPhail, city librarian of the Huntsville Public Library, and urged her to remove all books with representation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+) individuals from the children's section.

They presented McPhail with a slide deck about challenging LGBTQIA+ library materials called "Mama Bear and the Public Library." Sarah Raney had presented the slideshow to a church group the week before. Three titles were included in the slide deck and referenced by the elected officials, though formal requests to reconsider them were not submitted.

On May 25, McPhail had a meeting with the city manager and the deputy city manager, in which the librarian was again urged to relocate the books. She was informed city council members are applying pressure for the books to be handled. The city manager also advised her against having a Pride Month display in the library.

The library retained all three titles where they were originally shelved.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge reports.

Phillips, Wisconsin

During the May 26 board meeting for the Phillips Public Library, a group of about 12 people spoke out against specific titles which include topics of social justice, racism, or the lived experiences of individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+).

Two board members led the group and personally submitted requests for the reconsideration of 29 titles. Library director Rebecca Puhl said it was the first time she'd received a request for the reconsideration of library materials in the 14 years she's worked there.

A formal review of the titles conducted in accordance with the library's policies took place from May through September. All titles were retained.

Titles challenged in this case:

- *Ana on the Edge* by A.J. Sass
- *AntiRacist Baby* by Ibram X. Kendi
- *Beauty Woke* by NoNieqa Ramos
- *Call and Response: The Story of Black Lives Matter* by Veronica Chambers
- *Calvin* by Ronald Martin Ford, Jr.
- *Different Can Be Great: All Kinds of Families* by Lisa Bullard
- *Everything You Say About Me that's Wonderful is True* by Dr. Casey
- *From Archie to Zack* by Vincent X. Kirsch
- *Heather Has Two Mommies* by Lesléa Newman

- *Introducing Teddy: a Gentle Story About Gender and Friendship* by Jessica Walton
- *Jack (Not Jackie)* by Erica Silverman
- *Jacob's New Dress* by Sarah Hoffman
- *Julian at the Wedding* by Jessica Love
- *Love, Violet* by Charlotte Sullivan Wild
- *Melissa* (previously published as *George*) by Alex Gino
- *My Rainbow* by Trinity Neal
- *Not My Idea: A Book About Whiteness* by Anastasia Higginbotham
- *Our Skin: A First Conversation About Race* by Megan Madison
- *Papa, Daddy, and Riley* by Seamus Kirst
- *Pride: The Story of Harvey Milk and the Rainbow Flag* by Rob Sanders
- *Race Cars: A Children's Book About White Privilege* by Jenny Devenny
- *Sewing the Rainbow: A Story about Gilbert Baker and the Rainbow Flag* by Gayle Pitman
- *Stella Brings the Family* by Miriam Schiffer
- *This Day in June* by Gayle Pitman
- *Two Grooms on a Cake: The Story of America's First Gay Wedding* by Rob Sanders
- *Use of Force and the Fight Against Police Brutality* by Elliott Smith
- *What Are Your Words?: A Book About Pronouns* by Katherine Locke
- *When We Say Black Lives Matter* by Maxine Beneba Clarke
- *You Be You!: The Kid's Guide to Gender, Sexuality, and Family* by Jonathan Branfman

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report; Price County Review, June 9, 2022; WXPB, September 23, 2022.



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.

Massachusetts

On July 13, nine libraries in Massachusetts received copies of a letter requesting reconsideration of *My Heart is on the Ground: The Diary of Nannie Little Rose, a Sioux Girl* by Ann Rinaldi. The letter cited concerns over stereotypes, misinformation, and historical inaccuracies.

The libraries which received the challenge are: Hopkinton Public Library, Boston Public Library, Milford Town Library-, Lawrence Library, Beaman Memorial Public Library-, Griswold Memorial Library-, Edwards Public Library, Sunderland Public Library, Conant Free Public Library.

The book is currently available from all libraries who received the letter other than the Milford Town Library and the Beaman Memorial Public Library. It is unclear if they never owned the title or if they withdrew it in response to the challenge.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Gila County, Arizona

On June 9, Payson Town Councilor Jim Ferris recommended that the town drop out of the Gila County Library District because they have the book *Sex is a Funny Word* by Cory Sivlerberg.

If the Pason Library left the county system, it would lose \$239,000 in county funding.

A request for the reconsideration of *Sex is a Funny Word* earlier in the year resulted in it and other sex education titles for children being moved out of the children's room and into a new collection of resources for parents shelved in the adult section. The titles of the books which were relocated without having been challenged are unknown.

Reported in: Payson Roundup, June 14, 2022.

Alameda County, California

On June 11, the San Lorenzo branch of the Alameda County Library (ACL) held a Drag Queen Story Hour as part of their Pride Month programming. During the event, a group of five men wearing attire affiliated with the Proud Boys entered the library and yelled homophobic and transphobic slurs at the performer, who sought shelter. After the group left, the performer resumed the storytime.

The Alameda County Sheriff's Office opened a hate crimes investigation into the incident.

On July 2, ACL received a request for the reconsideration of the children's graphic novel *A Lucky Luke Adventure. 65, Ghost Hunt* by Lo Hartog Van Banda.

The patron objected to the book's use of derogatory terms for indigenous women and that native Americans in the book were illustrated with red skin.

The book was reviewed and the historic western series was relocated to the adult graphic novel section.

Reported in: The Mercury News, June 12, 2022; Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Carlsbad, California

In May, a patron submitted a request for the Carlsbad City Library to reconsider *Ancient Tales and Folklore of China* by Edward Werner. The patron indicated that the 1922 title was outdated and contained offensive inaccuracies, including claims that Chinese people have "smaller brains" and are "servile."

The title was reviewed and withdrawn.

On May 25, a patron heatedly objected to the Pride display in the children's section of the Carlsbad City Library. The patron then submitted a

request for the reconsideration of *My Moms Love Me* by Anna Membrino. On the form, they wrote, "Enough with the propaganda."

The review committee voted unanimously to retain the title.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge reports.

Solana Beach, California

A Solana Beach School District teacher requested a donation of K-6 lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+)-affirming titles from Open Books. The donation was received, but some community parents objected when they learned about it on social media.

In response to the parents' complaints, the district prevented the books from being added to the library until they could all be reviewed by teachers.

On June 27, the board updated the district's policy on the selection and reconsideration of school library materials. The new policy grants parents the right to specify titles their children are not allowed to check out from school libraries. It also established a "professional bookshelf" in each library for books on sensitive topics. Books shelved on these require parental consent.

Titles challenged:

- *And Tango Makes Three* by Justin Richardson and Peter Parnell
- *Annie's Plaid Shirt* by Stacy Davids
- *From the Stars in the Sky to the Fish in the Sea* by Kai Cheng Thom
- *I Am Jazz* by Jessica Herthel and Jazz Jennings
- *It Feels Good To Be Yourself: A Book About Gender Identity* by Theresa Thorn
- *It's Okay to be Different* by Todd Parr
- *Julian is a Mermaid* by Jessica Love
- *Marisol McDonald and the Clash Bash* by Monica Brown



- *Melissa* (previously published as *George*) by Alex Gino
- *Neither* by Airlie Anderson
- *One of a Kind, Like Me* by Laurin Mayeno
- *Pride: The Story of Harvey Milk and the Rainbow Flag* by Rob Sanders
- *Red: A Crayon's Story* by Michael Hall
- *Sparkle Boy* by Lesléa Newman
- *The Bravest Knight Who Ever Lived* by Daniel Errico
- *When Aidan Became a Brother* by Kyle Lukoff

It is unknown if the donated LGBTQIA+ titles were retained and if so, if they were added to the general collection or relegated to the “professional bookshelf.”

Reported in: *The San Diego Union-Tribune*, July 24, 2022.

Sonoma County, California

On June 16, all of the books from the children’s, teen, and adult Pride Month display at a Sonoma County Library branch were checked out by a single patron. The individual also took all of the flyers with Pride Month reading lists. The individual’s actions follow those prescribed in CatholicVote’s “Hide the Pride” campaign (*see: this issue: For the Record: Nationwide*).

Reported in: *The Press Democrat*, June 24, 2022.

Akron, Colorado

On June 9, a modest Pride Month display at the Akron Public Library that consisted solely of a rainbow flag in the teen section, became the subject of controversy.

That morning, a recently elected town council member came in and accused the librarian of using the library as a platform to promote “her personal religious LGBTQIA+ agenda.” The council member stated the flag was inappropriate unless other “religious” flags were also displayed.

He demanded proof in Akron city ordinance that displaying a Pride flag was allowed. The librarian reached out to the town clerk and attorney.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Cortez, Colorado

During the week of May 23, the Cortez Public Library began receiving phone calls from a group of individuals raising religious objections to a scheduled after-hours drag show celebrating Pride Month.

The group of “conservative patriots” held a prayer circle and referred to library and city staff as “pedophiles.”

It is unknown if the event took place.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Douglas County, Colorado

In April, a parent submitted a request for high school libraries in Douglas County Schools to reconsider *A Long Way Gone* by Ishmael Beah.

The 30 copies of the book in the district remain available for circulation.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Garfield County, Colorado

On June 9, a patron submitted a written complaint about the Pride displays located in all six branches of Garfield County Libraries.

In their letter, the patron stated that “being a active gay person is against the Bible” and that the displays are “celebrating something that is not normal and may be sinful.”

The library system informed the patron that they would keep the displays up throughout Pride month.

On June 20, a patron submitted a request for the reconsideration of *P is for Pterodactyl: The Worst Alphabet Book Ever: All the Letters that Misbehave and Make Words Nearly Impossible to*

Pronounce by Raj Haldar. They believed that the book’s references to ouija boards and psychics made it inappropriate for children.

The reconsideration committee recommended relocating the book from the Easy Reader section to children’s non-fiction, since the abecedary’s focus was on words that are difficult to read.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Cheshire, Connecticut

On June 17, a patron checked out every book that was included in a Pride display in the children’s section of the Cheshire Public Library. This method of censoring library displays was advocated for in CatholicVote in an campaign they called “Hide the Pride” which aimed to “empty libraries of LGBTQ content aimed at kids.”

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Coventry, Connecticut

On June 22, a woman carried all the books included as part of the Pride display in the children’s section at the Booth & Dimock Memorial Library to the front desk and demanded that they be burned. The woman claimed she represented a group of like-minded mothers.

Library director Margaret Khan informed her of the library’s collection development policy and their policy regarding the reconsideration of materials. Khan indicated that submitting a reconsideration request form was the only proper means of challenging library materials.

Town manager John Elsesser advised library staff to call the police if a similar incident occurs.

Reported in: *Journal Inquirer*, July 6, 2022.



Newtown, Connecticut

On June 16 a patron of the Cyrenius H. Booth Library emailed a complaint regarding the Pride display in the children's section and the decision for the library to circulate children's books about the lives and experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+) people.

The patron indicated that she homeschooled her four children and that it felt like they were "under assault by sexualized materials" when she came into the library. She also indicated that she represented a larger group who would boycott the library if the displays and books were not removed.

On June 23, the library director met with the patron and explained their collection and display policies. They reached a shared understanding around the presence of LGBTQIA+ materials in the library.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Niantic, Connecticut

On May 27, the East Lyme Public Library received a request to reconsider *The Final Girl Support Group* by Grady Hendrix.

The library retained the fictional title about a support group for the survivors of horror-movie style massacres.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Dade County, Florida

On July 20, Miami-Dade County School District board members voted 5-4 to bar use of two health textbooks in middle and high schools.

The board's vote was prompted by the group County Citizens Defending Freedom's objections to the textbooks' inclusion of information on abortion, contraception, gender identity, and sexual orientation.

The board had previously approved *Comprehensive Health Skills and Comprehensive Health Skills for Middle School* for use. Board member Lucia Baez-Geller said the books follow Florida's standards for reproductive health and that pulling them was detrimental to students.

United Teachers of Dade released a statement, saying the teachers union was "disturbed by the continued attempt[s] from extremist groups to censor books."

Reported in: Local 10 News, July 20, 2022.

Hernando County, Florida

On May 6, the Hernando County Public Library System received a request to reconsider *All Boys Aren't Blue: A Memoir-Manifesto* by George M. Johnson.

The request came from Kara Floyd, a Moms for Liberty member who applied for a seat on the Library Advisory Committee earlier in the year, but was not selected. Floyd's husband is running for the library board.

Floyd contended that the book violated Florida Statute 847.013, the criminal law governing "exposing minors to harmful motion pictures, exhibitions, shows, presentations, or representations."

The title was withdrawn from the library system.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Monroe County, Florida

On May 31, a patron of the Monroe County Public Library System submitted a formal request for the reconsideration of *The Hips on the Drag Queen Go Swish, Swish, Swish* by Lil Miss Hot Mess, claiming the picture book was abusive, predatory and sexually exploitative.

A committee of five librarians read and researched the book. When they met to discuss it, they voted

unanimously to retain the book where it was shelved in their Easy Reader collection.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

St. Johns County, Florida

On June 15, Debra Gibson, director of St. Johns County Public Library System, ordered the removal of all Pride Month displays from all six library locations. The directive came after County Administrator Hunter Conrad complained about the displays' existence. No formal review process was followed.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

West Palm Beach, Florida

In March, a parent at the Palm Beach County Library System challenged *If I Ran the Zoo* by Dr. Seuss over racist imagery.

The book was retained.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Canton, Georgia

In March, the Sequoyah Regional Library System received a formal request for the reconsideration of *Boy: Poems* by Patrick Phillips due to LGBTQIA+ content.

The library reviewed the title and retained it in the adult non-fiction section where it was originally cataloged.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Carrollton, Georgia

In mid-April, a man who did not have a library card came to the Dog River location of the West Georgia Regional Library System and requested assistance locating *Gender Queer: A Memoir* by Maia Kobabe. When given the book, he flipped to a specific page and voiced objections to the material. The library manager visited with him and provided



a copy of their materials reconsideration form.

The man did not submit the reconsideration request form, but did attend the May 10 board meeting. During the public comments section, he quoted Bible verses, claimed that *Gender Queer* was pornographic and illegal in Georgia, and stated that homosexuality is a sin.

The library system retained the book in the Young Adult sections of the libraries that own it.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Clayton County, Georgia

On June 3, a student at Clayton County Public Schools reported that *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas was removed from their school library because the book “criticized police” and was “divisive.”

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Walker County, Georgia

During the public comments section of their June 20 meeting, Jenn Smeiles, a mother who is homeschooling her three children, lambasted the Walker County School District board over five school library books she believes are inappropriate.

Smeiles specifically objected to the depiction of “explicit sexual activities, explicit violence, inflammatory racial commentary, homosexuality, excessive drug and alcohol use, and radical activist ideology.” Two of the titles she spoke about weren’t held in any of their school libraries.

Superintendent Damon Raines stated the board and staff would review the books objected to during the meeting. “Anytime somebody from the community comes to us with a concern, we’re going to address it,” Raines said.

After the meeting, Smeiles visited with other parents and encouraged

them to get involved. Board member Karen Harden texted Smeiles to thank her for reaching out about the books.

The titles challenged were:

- *Slaughterhouse-Five, or, the Children’s Crusade: A Duty-Dance with Death* by Kurt Vonnegut—not held
- *Sold* by Patricia McCormick
- *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* by Sherman Alexie—not held
- *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas
- *Tricks* by Ellen Hopkins

It is unknown if the three titles held in district libraries were retained, relocated, or withdrawn.

Reported in: WDEF, June 20, 2022; Chattanooga Times Free Press, June 26, 2022.

Algonquin, Illinois

On June 11, an individual raised objections on Facebook to a teen book discussion about *Flamer* by Mike Curato that was taking place at the Algonquin Area Public Library. The complainant said that parents of those attending needed to be warned about the book’s content.

The book discussion proceeded as originally scheduled and the graphic novel was retained.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Alpha Park, Illinois

On April 27 a parent in the Alpha Park Public Library District requested reconsideration of *Helping Our World Get Well: COVID Vaccines* by Beth Bacon and Kary Lee citing concerns that the book had a pro-vaccination bias.

The book was reviewed and retained.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Lombard, Illinois

On May 18 a patron called the Helen M. Plum Memorial Public Library District to ask if they planned on having another “sexuality in June” display in the children’s department like they did last year. She asserted that it was inappropriate to display books with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+) characters.

The librarian informed the patron that it was a Pride Month display and that the library would continue to have them.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Oswego, Illinois

On May 6, teachers at the Oswego Community Unit School District 308 were sent an email informing them that *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee would no longer be taught.

During a meeting held on May 11, staff were informed the decision to update the curriculum was led by Jadon Waller, the district’s director of diversity and inclusion.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Roselle, Illinois

On June 22, the Roselle Public Library District received a request for the reconsideration of the DVD *Pussy Riot: A Punk Prayer*.

The documentary was retained.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Schaumburg, Illinois

On June 8, the library board of the Schaumburg Township District Library received a letter following the template in CatholicVote’s “Hide the Pride” campaign objecting to the library’s Pride Month display and all of the books included (*see: this issue: For the Record: Nationwide*).



The library kept the display up throughout June.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Wheeling, Illinois

On June 14, a patron challenged the book *'Twas the Night Before Pride* by Joanna McClintick at the Indian Trails Public Library District.

The title was retained.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Allen, Indiana

During their April 25 board meeting, Northwest Allen County Schools tabled a vote to approve four math textbooks. Board member Kent Somers expressed concerns they may contain word problems with “inappropriate content” such as interracial marriage.

Somers’s concerns echo those raised earlier in the month surrounding math textbooks in Florida (*see: Journal of Intellectual Freedom and Privacy, v.7 iss.2: For the Record: Florida*).

On May 9, the board approved three of the textbooks. On May 23, the final contested math textbook was approved. The titles of the textbooks in question were not reported or included in the board minutes.

Reported in: WBOI, May 10, 2022; Northwest Allen County Schools Regular Board Meeting Minutes, May 23, 2022.

Indianapolis, Indiana

On May 16, a patron at the Indianapolis-Marion County Public Library (IMCPL) requested the reconsideration of *The Hips on the Drag Queen Go Swish, Swish, Swish* by Lil Miss Hot Mess.

The grandparent who filed the challenge wrote that “the library is not the place for political and social justice” and “grooming of children for this lifestyle is disgusting.”

The review committee voted unanimously to retain the title.

On June 8, an IMCPL patron submitted a request for the reconsideration of *Love in the Wild* by Katy Tanis, claiming that “it depicts homosexual animals in love . . . to groom children into homosexuality.”

The review committee voted unanimously to retain this title, as well.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Jennings County, Indiana

Between June 6 and June 10, a patron and members of the Promise Keepers challenged the Pride Month display at Jennings County Public Library. In addition to submitting complaints to the library, they registered complaints with the mayor and the county commissioners.

Approximately 60 members of the public also spoke out against the display during the public comments section of the June 8 library board meeting.

The board held a special meeting on June 14 to discuss the display. They approved a policy allowing the reconsideration of library displays by a 5-0 vote. The board also directed rainbow flags and other signage to be removed from the display, but allowed the books to remain as part of it.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report; *The Tribune*, June 17, 2022.

Lake County, Indiana

On June 16, a patron of the Lake County Public Library challenged the book *Trans: When Ideology Meets Reality* by Helen Joyce, asserting that it is “meant to provide a faux intellectual framework to harass trans folk” and was a “call for genocide” of transgender people. He said it was particularly offensive that it was on display during Pride Month.

The book was retained. In their June 18 response letter to the patron, they indicated that the book was displayed on the new book shelf due to its date of purchase

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Davenport, Iowa

On May 27, the Davenport Public Library began receiving objections to a planned Pride month program for teens called “Teen Summer Brunch: Drag Queens and Kings.”

Complaints were received from individuals nationwide, as the event was covered by the controversial homophobic and anti-transgender Twitter account Libs of TikTok. Chaya Raichik, who owns the account, has used it to popularize the term “grooming” as a pejorative for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+) individuals.

The program was held on June 27. Approximately 40 protesters showed up that day.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Creston, Iowa

The Matilda J. Gibson Memorial Library received numerous letters complaining about their Pride month display between June 1 and June 18. The library also received complaints about the display through an online survey that is part of their strategic planning process.

The Pride display remained up throughout June.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

DeWitt, Iowa

On June 13, Jason Tharp’s book *It’s Okay to be a Unicorn!* was stolen from a series of kiosks in Westbrook Park, where it was used on a storywalk—a way



for people to read a book page by page as they walk along a trail.

The book was removed the day before staff of the DeWitt Community Library were to lead community members along the storywalk as part of their summer programming.

DeWitt Parks and Recreation Director Kevil Lake notified the police about the theft of the library material.

Library director Janette McMahon said the storywalk will be restored soon. The book remains available from the library for circulation.

Reported in: *Clinton Herald*, June 22, 2022.

Concordia, Kansas

On June 3, the Frank Carlson Library received a request to reconsider the book *A Whale of a Tea Party* by Erica S. Perl due to a snail's use of they/them pronouns.

The book was retained.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Garnett, Kansas

In the spring, the Principal of Garnett Elementary School in the Unified School District 365 removed *Stamped (for Kids): Racism, Antiracism, and You* by Jason Reynolds and Ibram X. Kendi "for review."

The principal never returned the book.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Johnson County, Kansas

On April 20, a patron of the Johnson County Library formally requested the relocation of *The Summer of Owen Todd* by Tony Abbott from the children's section to the teen section. They expressed their belief that childhood sexual abuse was too heavy of a topic for children to learn about.

The library retained the title where it was originally shelved.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Newton, Kansas

After the board of Newton Public Schools USD 373 approved the purchase of 34 teacher-requested titles for school libraries, superintendent Fred Van Ranken said the district's screening process for objectionable content isn't strong enough and that parents should be involved in the selection of library materials.

Van Ranken said the novels the board approved contained content the board should not have approved, including language, sexual content, violence, drugs and alcohol, mature themes, and religious/political themes.

A book review panel is being convened to evaluate the books that were challenged by Van Ranken before any student could read them.

The titles undergoing review are:

- *A Woman is no Man* by Etaf Rum
- *All American Boys* by Jason Reynolds and Brendan Kiely
- *Allegedly* by Tiffany Jackson
- *Dear Martin* by Nic Stone
- *Don't Ask Me Where I'm From* by Jennifer De Leon
- *Educated* by Tara Westover
- *Esperanza Rising* by Pam Munoz Ryan
- *Freak the Mighty* by Rodman Philbrick
- *George vs. George: The American Revolution as Seen from Both Sides* by Rosalyn Schanzer
- *Ghost* by Jason Reynolds
- *Holes* by Louis Sachar
- *Home Fire* by Kamila Shamsie
- *Homegoing* by Yaa Gyasi
- *I am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter* by Erika Sanchez
- *Kindred* by Octavia E. Butler
- *Little Fires Everywhere* by Celeste Ng
- *Malala: My Story of Standing Up for Girls Rights* by Malala Yousafzai
- *Never Let Me Go* by Kazuo Ishiguro

- *Not So Pure and Simple* by Lamar Giles
- *News of the World* by Paulette Jiles
- *One Dark Night* by Lisa Wheeler
- *Paul Revere's Ride: The Landlord's Tale* by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
- *Purple Hibiscus* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie
- *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* by Sherman Alexie
- *The Book of Unknown Americans* by Cristina Henriquez
- *The Girl with Seven Names: Escape from North Korea* by Hyeonseo Lee
- *The Girl with the Louding Voice* by Abi Daré
- *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas
- *The Poet X* by Elizabeth Acevedo
- *The Watsons Go to Birmingham* by Christopher Paul Curtis
- *There There* by Tommy Orange
- *Tuck Everlasting* by Natalie Babbitt
- *Ungifted* by Gordon Korman
- *Weslandia* by Paul Fleischman

Reported in: *Wichita Eagle*, May 11, 2022.

Oakley, Kansas

On April 27, a patron of the Oakley Public Library submitted a request for the reconsideration of *Fred Gets Dressed* by Peter Brown. She expressed concerns that the picture book included what she viewed to be "LGBTQ content."

On May 25, the board voted unanimously to retain the book.

Reported in: *Kansas Reflector*, May 10, 2022, and May 26, 2022.

Pittsburg, Kansas

On June 13, the board and director of the Pittsburg Public Library received an emailed complaint regarding their Pride Month display in the Young Adult section of the library. The display was created by the library's teen volunteer group, the "Volunteens." The complaint used language from CatholicVote's "Hide the Pride" template.



The director issued a board-approved response, affirming the library's commitment to the freedom to read and the Library Bill of Rights and stated that "the library represents the entire community—and that includes LGBTQ individuals."

On June 21, 22, and 30 both the director and assistant director received complaints using similar language to the email they library received.

A discussion of the incidents was scheduled to take place during their August 10 board meeting.

(See: *this issue: For the Record: Nationwide*).

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Pulaski County, Kentucky

On June 9, a display in the Pulaski County Public Library created by a librarian and the Lake Cumberland Diversity Council commemorating the Federal holiday Juneteenth was taken down. The display's removal occurred just days before the community's Juneteenth Jubilee.

The adult programming librarian who collaborated on the display left their position with the library on June 10.

Library director Charlotte Keeney said she took the display down because it did not follow the library's display policy, which did not allow "sponsored" displays. She said she has received "a ton of calls" in the wake of the display's removal.

Reported in: Commonwealth Journal, June 15, 2022.

Scott County, Kentucky

On June 23, a patron of the Scout County Public Library submitted a request for the reconsideration of *Big Nate: From the Top* by Lincoln Pierce, which she said was sexist and contained innuendos. She asked that the book be moved to the adult section and

suggested placing a large warning label on the cover and a disclaimer in the catalog record.

The comic strips included in the book were previously published serially in the comics sections of newspapers.

The library retained the book in the children's section.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Beauregard, Louisiana

On June 1, a grandparent submitted a request for the Beauregard Parish Library to reconsider *Sewing the Rainbow: A Story About Gilbert Baker and the Rainbow Flag* by Gayle Pitman.

The non-fiction picture book intended for 4 to 8 year olds is about the creation of the rainbow flag and how it's okay to be yourself.

The book was retained.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Covington, Louisiana

On June 14, a councilperson threatened to slash the budget of the St. Tammany Parish Library (STPL) due to a Pride Month display in the adult section of the Mandeville branch.

In the following days, STPL received additional written complaints about their Pride Month displays, as well as angry phone calls, emails, and Facebook posts.

Formal complaints against the displays were submitted by a parish councilperson, two Mandeville residents, and the God's Remedy for America Evangelism Ministry.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Union, Maine

During the public comments section of the May 5 Regional School Unit 40 board meeting, community members voiced objections to the inclusion of *Gender Queer: A Memoir* by Maia Kobabe

and *Lawn Boy* by Jonathan Evison in the Medomak Valley High School library.

Superintendent Steve Nolan said that the books had already been formally challenged in October 2021, reviewed in accordance with district policy, and retained based on the committee's recommendations. One board member spoke out against this past decision.

Steve Karp led the objections to the books' depictions of the lived experience of gay and non-binary people during the meeting. He called the books pornographic and said that giving them to minors was "the definition of grooming."

Bill Moody asked if the district was working for the devil.

The board opted to reconsider their prior reconsideration of *Gender Queer*. On October 20, they once again voted to retain it in the high school library.

Reported in: Courier-Gazette, May 6, 2022; Bangor Daily News, October 21, 2022.

Montgomery County, Maryland

On June 25, four protesters showed up to a 3:00 p.m. Drag Queen Story Hour hosted by Montgomery County Public Libraries as part of the week-long "Pride in the Plaza" celebration.

The protesters repeatedly disrupted the storytime by shouting comments about pedophilia and asking the performer questions like "How does it feel to know you offend God?"

Library director Anita Vassallo told them they needed to leave and ushered them to the exit. A senior librarian called security. Two of the protesters filmed the security response and continued shouting comments as they were escorted from the premises.

Afterwards, a larger protest organized by a religious group was held outside of the library. A neighbor called



in a noise complaint to the police. The protesters disbanded around 4:45 p.m.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Prince George's County, Maryland

On July 11, a patron of the Prince George's County Memorial Library System challenged the book *Jerusalem's Queen: A Novel of Salome Alexandra* by Angela Elwell Hunt, claiming it was "highly sacrilegious."

Library staff reviewed the title and it was retained as part of the collection.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

St. Mary's County, Maryland

During the public comments section of their May 25 meeting, a resident of California addressed the board of St. Mary's County Public Schools about "LGBTQ propaganda" and "Black Lives Matter posters."

The out-of-state resident also stated that the portrayal of a homosexual relationship in the book *The Thing About Jellyfish* by Ali Benjamin "robbed me and my son of his innocence." She also stated that a similar thing happened to her daughter.

The outcome of this challenge is unknown.

On June 14, St. Mary's County Library received a request for the reconsideration of *Who Are You? The Kid's Guide to Gender Identity* by Brook Pessin-Whedbee. The patron who challenged the book stated that confusion around gender is destroying the lives of children and parents.

The book was reviewed by a committee and retained in the library.

Reported in: *Southern Maryland News*, May 31, 2022.

Braintree, Massachusetts

On June 7, Rayla Campbell, a candidate for Secretary of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, challenged the book *Gender Queer: A Memoir* by Maia Kobabe at the Thayer Public Library. After speaking with the librarian, Campbell went on Facebook Live to describe the graphic novel and complain about "libraries using tax payer dollars to purchase pornography."

The library retained the graphic novel.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Lunenburg, Massachusetts

In December, a patron of the Lunenburg Public Library requested the reconsideration of *Determined to Stay: Palestinian Youth Fight for their Village* by Jody Sokolower because they felt it misrepresented Jewish history.

The title was retained.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Springfield, Massachusetts

On June 9, a librarian at the Springfield City Library found *The 1619 Project: A New Origin Story* by Nikole Hannah-Jones hidden behind shelved books in a disparate section of the library from where it belongs. It was returned to the proper shelf.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Tyngsborough, Massachusetts

On May 17, the Tyngsborough Public Library received a written challenge to an upcoming Tarot for Teens and Tweens Program. The complainant stated that "tarot and other occult spiritual practices are potentially dangerous and not for children." They recommended the library host "wholesome" programs instead.

The program was held as scheduled.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Big Rapids, Michigan

On June 4, a patron of the Big Rapids Community Library emailed director Lauren Perkins to complain about the Pride Display in the children's section. The complaint asserted that "issues of sexuality are very controversial" and therefore "not appropriate topics for young children."

Perkins defended the display, provided information about the library's reconsideration policy along with the form to request reconsideration of titles.

On July 19, the patron submitted requests for the reconsideration of five books from the display.

The library retained all titles in the children's section.

Titles challenged:

- *Being You: A First Conversation About Gender* by Megan Madison
- *I'm Not a Girl: A Transgender Story* by Maddox Lyons
- *Jacob's Room to Choose* by Sarah Hoffman
- *Pink, Blue, and You! Questions for Kids About Gender Stereotypes* by Elise Gravel
- *The Rainbow Parade* by Emily Neilson

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Canton, Michigan

On April 6, a patron of the Canton Public Library requested reconsideration of two books shelved in the parenting section: *My Vulva* by Courtney Angermeier and *Can I Have Babies Too?: Sexuality and Relationships Education for Children from Infancy up to Age 11* by Sanderijn van der Doef.



On the reconsideration forms, the grandparent characterized the books as traumatizing and pornographic.

The books were retained.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge reports.

Grandville, Michigan

In May, the Grand View Elementary School principal informed the school librarian that a group called Grandville Parents for Education (GPFE) had submitted complaints about four titles in the collection. All of the titles contain main characters who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+).

According to their website, GPFE supports “traditional values” and is opposed to the teaching of critical race theory; the display of Black Lives Matters and rainbow Pride flags; the use of school property to host LGBTQIA+ student groups or clubs; LGBTQIA+ library books; the implementation of a gender neutral bathroom policy; Marxism; and social emotional learning.

GPFE created a form on their website to help automate the book complaint process. Their members have publicly shared resources from Moms for Liberty and Book Looks on social media. .

These are the titles they challenged in May, all of which were withdrawn:

- *And Tango Makes Three* by Justin Richardson and Peter Parnell
- *I am Jazz* by Jessica Herthel and Jazz Jennings
- *Melissa* (previously published as *George*) by Alex Gino
- *Rick* by Alex Gino

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Hancock, Michigan

On June 8, the superintendent of Hancock School District ordered the head

librarian of the Hancock School Public Library (HSPL) to take down their Pride display. HSPL is a public library that is physically located within the high school through a contract between the Portage Lake District Library (PLDL) system and the school district.

The library’s contract does not give them control over displays and the library does not have a display policy.

The director of PLDL met with the superintendent and HSPL’s head librarian to discuss the issue. The superintendent insisted that any display which offended patrons should be taken down. He agreed to a compromise where the books could be displayed on easels in the sections of the library where they are normally shelved. The original display was left empty.

On June 10, the superintendent requested that the display space be used for a different display or for the shelving to be removed entirely. The library chose to remove the shelves.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge reports.

Saginaw, Michigan

On May 9, the middle and high school principals for the Swan Valley School District received an email from a parent requesting the removal of 201 titles from school libraries and providing links to YouTube videos of people protesting the books during the board meetings of other school districts.

In her email, she claimed the books were inappropriate because they contained profanity, pornography, critical race theory, and/or characters who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+).

The complainant was informed of the district’s policies governing the reconsideration of instructional and library material. She addressed the board about the books during the

public comments section of their May 19 meeting.

The spreadsheet of books challenged indicated which school libraries held them. While the outcome of the challenges was not reported, it is clear by searching the online catalogs that at least some of the titles were removed.

Books challenged in this case:

- *101 Ways to Dance* by Kathy Stinson
- *33 Snowfish* by Adam Rapp
- *A Court of Frost and Starlight* by Sarah J. Maas
- *A Court of Mist and Fury* by Sarah J. Maas
- *A Court of Silver Flames* by Sarah J. Maas
- *A Court of Thorns and Roses* by Sarah J. Maas
- *A Court of Wings and Ruin* by Sarah J. Maas
- *A Day in the Life of Marlon Bundo* by Jill Twiss
- *A House for Everyone: A Story to Help Children Learn About Gender Identity and Gender Expression* by Jo Hirst
- *A Prayer for Vengeance* by John Stafford
- *Adam* by Ariel Schrag
- *All American Boys* by Jason Reynolds and Brendan Kiely
- *All Boys Aren’t Blue: A Memoir-Manifesto* by George M. Johnson
- *Allegedly* by Tiffany Jackson
- *Almost Perfect* by Brian Katcher
- *And Tango Makes Three* by Justin Richardson and Peter Parnell
- *Another Day* by David Levithan
- *AntiRacist Baby* by Ibram X. Kendi
- *Ask Me How I Got Here* by Christine Heppermann
- *Autoboyography* by Christina Lauren
- *Beautiful* by Amy Reed
- *Beetle & The Hollowbones* by Aliza Layne
- *Beloved* by Toni Morrison
- *Beyond Magenta: Transgender Teens Speak Out* by Susan Kuklin



- *Beyond the Gender Binary* by Alok Vaid-Menon
- *Blankets: An Illustrated Novel* by Craig Thompson
- *Blue Is the Warmest Color* by Julie Maroh
- *Boy Girl Boy* by Ronald Koertge
- *Breathless* by Jennifer Niven
- *Call Me By Your Name* by André Aciman
- *Call Me Max* by Kyle Lukoff
- *Check, Please! #hockey* by Ngozi Ukazu
- *Cheer Up: Love and Pompoms* by Crystal Frasier
- *City of Heavenly Fire* by Cassandra Clare
- *Clockwork Princess* by Cassandra Clare
- *Crank* by Ellen Hopkins
- *Damsel* by Elana K. Arnold
- *Daughters Unto Devils* by Amy Lukavics
- *Dead End* by Jason Myers
- *Deogratias, a Tale of Rwanda* by Jean-Philippe Stassen
- *Doing It! Let's Talk About Sex* by Hannah Witton
- *Drama* by Raina Telgemeier
- *Dreaming in Cuban* by Cristina Garcia
- *Dumplin': Go Big or Go Home* by Julie Murphy
- *Eleanor & Park* by Rainbow Rowell
- *Emergency Contact* by Mary H.K. Choi
- *Empire of Storms (Throne of Glass 5)* by Sarah J. Maas
- *Exit Here* by Jason Myers
- *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* by Jonathan Safran Foer
- *Fade* by Lisa McMann
- *Fallout* by Ellen Hopkins
- *Felix Ever After* by Kacen Callender
- *Feral Sins* by Suzanne Wright
- *Fifteen Hundreds Miles from the Sun* by Jonny Garza Villa
- *Flamer* by Mike Curato
- *Fly on the Wall: How One Girl Saw Everything* by E. Lockhart
- *Forever* by Judy Blume
- *Forever for a Year* by B.T. Gottfred
- *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic* by Alison Bechdel
- *Gabi, a Girl in Pieces* by Isabel Quintero
- *Gender Queer: A Memoir* by Maia Kobabe
- *Georgia Peaches and Other Forbidden Fruit* by Jaye Robin Brown
- *Ghost Boys* by Jewell Parker Rhodes
- *Girl in Pieces* by Kathleen Glasgow
- *Graceling* by Kristin Cashore
- *Grl2grl: Short Fictions* by Julie Anne Peters
- *Homegoing* by Yaa Gyasi
- *House of Earth and Blood* by Sarah J. Maas
- *How Can I Be an Ally? (Racial Justice Today)* by Fatima ElMekki
- *How to be an Antiracist* by Ibram X. Kendi
- *I Am Jazz* by Jessica Herthel and Jazz Jennings
- *I am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter* by Erika Sanchez
- *I Need a New Butt!* by Dawn McMillan
- *I Never* by Laura Hopper
- *Identical* by Ellen Hopkins
- *I'll Give You the Sun* by Jandy Nelson
- *I'm not a Girl: A Transgender Story* by Maddox Lyons
- *Impulse* by Ellen Hopkins
- *Infandous* by Elana K. Arnold
- *Introducing Teddy: a Gentle Story About Gender and Friendship* by Jessica Walton
- *It Feels Good To Be Yourself: A Book About Gender Identity* by Theresa Thorn
- *It's Not the Stork!: a Book about Girls, Boys, Babies, Bodies, Families, and Friends* by Robie H. Harris
- *It's Perfectly Normal* by Robie H. Harris
- *Jack (Not Jackie)* by Erica Silverman
- *Jack of Hearts (and Other Parts)* by L.C. Rosen
- *Jay's Gay Agenda* by Jason June
- *Jesus Land: A Memoir* by Julia Scheeres
- *Julian is a Mermaid* by Jessica Love
- *Juliet Takes a Breath* by Gabby Rivera
- *Juliet Takes a Breath: Graphic Novel Adaptation* by Gabby Rivera
- *Kiss Number 8* by Colleen AF Venable and Ellen T. Crenshaw
- *L8r, G8r* by Lauren Myracle
- *Last Night at the Telegraph Club* by Malinda Lo
- *Lawn Boy* by Jonathan Evison
- *Leah On the Offbeat* by Becky Albertalli
- *Lexicon* by Max Barry
- *Living Dead Girl* by Elizabeth Scott
- *Lolita* by Vladimir Nabokov
- *Looking for Alaska* by John Green
- *Lucky* by Alice Sebold
- *Marriage of a Thousand Lies* by S.J. Sindu
- *Me and Earl and the Dying Girl* by Jesse Andrews
- *Melissa* (previously published as *George*) by Alex Gino
- *Milk and Honey* by Rupi Kaur
- *Monday's Not Coming* by Tiffany Jackson
- *My Friend Dahmer* by Derf Backderf
- *My Princess Boy* by Cheryl Kilodavis
- *Neanderthal Opens the Door to the Universe* by Preston Norton
- *Nineteen Minutes* by Jodi Picoult
- *None of the Above* by I.W. Gregorio
- *Not My Idea: A Book About Whiteness* by Anastasia Higginbotham
- *Not Otherwise Specified* by Hannah Moskowitz
- *Odd One Out* by Nic Stone
- *One Man Guy* by Michael Barakiva
- *One of Us is Lying* by Karen McManus
- *Our Own Private Universe* by Robin Talley
- *Out of Darkness* by Ashley Hope Pérez
- *People Kill People* by Ellen Hopkins
- *Perfect* by Ellen Hopkins
- *Perfectly Good White Boy* by Carrie Mesrobian



- *Prince and the Dressmaker* by Jen Wang
- *Push* by Sapphire
- *Queer: A Graphic History* by Meg-John Barker
- *Queer: The Ultimate LGBTQ Guide for Teens* by Kathy Belge
- *Race Cars: A Children's Book About White Privilege* by Jenny Devenny
- *Racial Justice in America* by Hedreich Nichols
- *Rainbow Boys* by Alex Sanchez
- *Rainbow High* by Alex Sanchez
- *Real Live Boyfriends: Yes. Boyfriends, Plural. If My Life Weren't Complicated, I Wouldn't be* Ruby Oliver by E. Lockhart
- *Red at the Bone* by Jacqueline Woodson
- *Red Hood* by Elana K. Arnold
- *Rethinking Normal: A Memoir in Transition* by Katie Rain Hill
- *Rick* by Alex Gino
- *S.E.X.: The All-You-Need-to-Know Sexuality Guide to Get You Through Your Teens and Twenties* by Heather Corinna
- *Scars* by C.A. Rainfield
- *Sex is a Funny Word* by Cory Silverberg
- *Sex Plus: Learning, Loving, and Enjoying Your Body* by Laci Green
- *Sex: A Book for Teens: An Uncensored Guide to Your Body, Sex, and Safety* by Nikol Hasler
- *Shine* by Lauren Myracle
- *Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda* by Becky Albertalli
- *Slaughterhouse-Five, or, the Children's Crusade: A Duty-Dance with Death* by Kurt Vonnegut
- *Sold* by Patricia McCormick
- *Something Happened in Our Town: A Child's Story About Racial Injustice* by Marianne Celano, Marietta Collins, Ann Hazzard, and Jennifer Zivion
- *Sparkle Boy* by Lesléa Newman
- *Speak* by Laurie Halse Anderson
- *Stamped (For Kids): Racism, Antiracism, and You* by Sonja Cherry-Paul, Ibram X. Kendi, and Jason Reynolds
- *Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You* by Jason Reynolds and Ibram X. Kendi
- *Symptoms of Being Human* by Jeff Garvin
- *The 1619 Project: A New Origin Story* by Nikole Hannah-Jones
- *The 57 Bus: A True Story of Two Teenagers and the Crime that Changed Their Lives* by Dashka Slater
- *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* by Sherman Alexie
- *The Art of Racing in the Rain* by Garth Stein
- *The Assassin and the Empire* by Sarah J. Maas
- *The Berlin Boxing Club* by Rob Sharenow
- *The Best Laid Plans* by Cameron Lund
- *The Black Flamingo* by Dean Atta
- *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison
- *The Breakaways* by Cathy G. Johnson
- *The Carnival at Bray* by Jessie Ann Foley
- *The Detour* by S.A. Bodeen
- *The DUFF: Designated Ugly Fat Friend* by Kody Keplinger
- *The GayBCs* by M.L. Webb
- *The Girl Who Fell From the Sky* by Heidi W Durrow
- *The Glass Castle* by Jeannette Walls
- *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood
- *The Handsome Girl & Her Beautiful Boy* by B.T. Gottfred
- *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas
- *The Haters* by Jesse Andrews
- *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros
- *The Infinite Moment of Us* by Lauren Myracle
- *The Invisible Life of Addie LaRue* by Victoria Schwab
- *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini
- *The Music of What Happens* by Bill Konigsberg
- *The Nerdy and the Dirty* by B.T. Gottfred
- *The Nowhere Girls* by Amy Reed
- *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* by Stephen Chbosky
- *The Poet X* by Elizabeth Acevedo
- *The Realm of Possibility* by David Levithan
- *The Truth about Alice* by Jennifer Mathieu
- *The Upside of Unrequited* by Becky Albertalli
- *The V-Word: True Stories About First-Time Sex* by Amber J. Keyser
- *They, She, He, Me. Free to Be* by Maya Christina Gonzalez
- *Thirteen Reasons Why* by Jay Asher
- *This Book is Anti-Racist* by Tiffany Jewell
- *This Book is Gay* by Juno Dawson
- *This Day in June* by Gayle Pitman
- *Tilt* by Ellen Hopkins
- *Triangles* by Ellen Hopkins
- *Tricks* by Ellen Hopkins
- *TTYL (Talk to You Later)* by Lauren Myracle
- *Two Boys Kissing* by David Levithan
- *Vampire Academy* by Richelle Mead
- *Violin Maker's Daughter* by Sharon Maas
- *Wait, What? A Comic Book Guide to Relationships, Bodies, and Growing Up* by Heather Corinna
- *Water for Elephants* by Sara Gruen
- *What Girls Are Made Of* by Elana K. Arnold
- *What is White Privilege? (Racial Justice Today)* by Leigh Ann Erickson
- *When I Was the Greatest* by Jason Reynolds
- *Yolk* by Mary H.K. Choi
- *YOLO* by Lauren Myracle
- *You: A Novel* by Caroline Kepnes

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Anoka County, Minnesota

On May 4, a patron of the Anoka County Library requested



reconsideration of the DVD *Catherine the Great*. They expressed concerns that the film contains sex but bore no labeling indicating that this was so.

The reconsiderations committee voted unanimously to retain it as shelved and unmodified. The management team endorsed this decision.

On June 9, an email following the CatholicVote “Hide the Pride” template was sent to the director of the Anoka County Library system. The email bore the signatures of 14 community members and demanded the immediate removal of the library system’s Pride Month displays.

The director thanked the 14 signatories on the email and shared the library’s reconsideration policies and form with them. She also shared the email with the board.

The displays were kept up.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Hennepin County, Minnesota

Mercer Mayer’s *Just a Special Thanksgiving* was challenged at the Hennepin County Library for inaccurate and stereotypical portrayals of indigenous people.

The book was retained.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Cass County, Missouri

On June 23, the wife of a local pastor requested that the Cass County Public Library reconsider the book *Spike: The Penguin with Rainbow Hair* by Sarah Cullen when it was read during a story time.

The patron alleged the picture book about a penguin’s struggles to fit in and learning to love yourself was “LGBT indoctrination.”

The title was withdrawn.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Columbia, Missouri

On May 13, a patron requested that the Daniel Boone Regional Library remove every book they held by Dinesh D’Souza.

The library retained all challenged titles.

- *America: Imagine a World Without Her* by Dinesh D’Souza
- *Death of a Nation: Plantation Politics and the Making of the Democratic Party* by Dinesh D’Souza
- *Godforsaken: Bad Things Happen, is There a God Who Cares? Yes, Here’s Proof* by Dinesh D’Souza
- *Hillary’s America: The Secret History of the Democratic Party* by Dinesh D’Souza
- *Life After Death: The Evidence* by Dinesh D’Souza
- *Obama’s America: Unmaking the American Dream* by Dinesh D’Souza
- *Stealing America: What My Experience with Criminal Gangs Taught Me About Obama, Hillary, and the Democratic Party* by Dinesh D’Souza
- *The Big Lie: Exposing the Nazi Roots of the American Left* by Dinesh D’Souza
- *The Enemy at Home: The Cultural Left and its Responsibility for 9/11* by Dinesh D’Souza
- *The Roots of Obama’s Rage* by Dinesh D’Souza
- *United States of Socialism: Who’s Behind it. Why it’s Evil. How to Stop It.* by Dinesh D’Souza
- *What’s so Great About America* by Dinesh D’Souza
- *What’s so Great About Christianity* by Dinesh D’Souza

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Grain Valley, Missouri

On April 25, Grain Valley Schools sent a letter to staff and parents that staff are no longer allowed to display cards or stickers indicating that their

classroom is a safe space for individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+).

The letter indicated that the school board made the decision after receiving a complaint that there were indicators of LGBTQIA+ safe spaces in some classrooms.

A gathering of demonstrators formed at the school in protest of the announcement the afternoon it was made. Grain Valley High School senior Kaylee Butler said, “I just want to come out here today and show LGBTQ kids that I’m standing with them, I’m protesting with them, I’m there for them.”

Reported in: KSHB, April 25, 2022; USA Today, April 28, 2022.

Independence, Missouri

In April, a parent submitted a request for the Independence School District to reconsider *Cats vs. Robots: This is War* by Margaret Stohl. They were reading the book with their child and submitted the request after they learned it included a non-binary character.

A reconsideration committee was formed. They recommended withdrawing the title.

At their June 14 meeting, the school board voted to approve the committee’s recommendation and ban the book from district school libraries.

Reported in: KCUR, June 17, 2022.

Richmond Heights, Missouri

In April, a patron submitted a formal request for the Richmond Heights Memorial Library to either withdraw the book *Outrageously Alice* by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor from their collection, label it to indicate that it contains “mature content,” or reclassify it as a young adult title.

The book was reviewed, retained, and kept in the collection it was originally cataloged for without a label.



Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Stone County, Missouri

On June 20, staff of the Stone County Library received requests for the reconsideration of *I'm an Activist* by Will Mara, *Pride Puppy* by Robin Stevenson, and *They Love, We Love* by Sarah Kate Smigiel.

The books were reviewed and retained.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Missoula County, Montana

On October 18, 2021, the mother of a 5th grade Missoula County Public Schools (MCPS) student registered a complaint about *When You Trap a Tiger* by Tae Keller.

The magical tale about Korean folklore coming to life was read aloud to students. The parent believed it was inappropriate for her daughter to hear a story that included characters who were in a same-sex relationship.

On December 9, 2021, the mother of an MCPS kindergarten student met with the principal and school librarian to discuss her challenge to the book *Ogilvy* by Deb Underwood, which her son had checked out from the library.

The parent expressed her belief that it was not appropriate for children to learn about non-conformity to gender stereotypes.

During the public comments section of the March 8 school board meeting, the complainant's husband voiced objections to the book and said MCPS should not allow books with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+) content in school libraries.

Both books were retained in district elementary school libraries.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Indianola, Nebraska

In June, the board president of the Indianola Public Library (IPL), contacted the Nebraska Library Commission to request that they compel IPL to remove a children's picture book that was donated to the library. They informed her this was a local issue and advised her to follow the library's reconsideration process.

Instead of submitting a request for the reconsideration of *Prince and Knight* by Daniel Haack, the board president pushed for the book's removal during IPL's June and July board meetings. Her arguments that the book's portrayal of a same-sex relationship was "sinful" did not convince the rest of the board that its removal was justified.

The book was retained.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Reno, Nevada

On June 26, a group of Proud Boys protested outside of the Sparks branch of the Washoe County Library System during a Drag Queen Storytime event that was part of their Pride Month celebrations. One of the protestors approached the library while carrying a gun, causing people inside the library, including children, to run for shelter.

Nevada is an open-carry state.

Reported in: News 4, June 26, 2022.

Contoocook, New Hampshire

On June 1, a parent complained to the Hopkinton School District after a third-grade teacher read *Julian at the Wedding* by Jessica Love to her class.

The parent claimed her daughter "was confused about gender when she came home" and alleged that the book contained "subliminal messages" about gender and sexuality. She organized a group of other parents who began inundating the teacher with emailed complaints.

The book is no longer available from the school library. It is unclear if a formal request for reconsideration was ever submitted.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Cherry Hill, New Jersey

During the three weeks leading up to a June 7 Drag Queen Story Time program at the Cherry Hill Free Public Library, staff received emails and calls from an organized group in protest of the event. Most of those who contacted the library to object were from outside its service area, including as far away as Illinois.

The library went forward with the program as scheduled.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Pennsauken, New Jersey

On June 6, a local parent sent an email objecting to an upcoming Drag Queen Storytime event was sent to the Pennsauken mayor, Pennsauken Free Public Library's director and youth services librarian, the chief of police, and township committee members.

The event was held as scheduled on June 16.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Union, New Jersey

Throughout the month of June, the Union Free Public Library received complaints from a patron about the library's Pride Month displays. On multiple occasions, she checked out every book displayed, following the blueprint of CatholicVote's "Hide the Pride" campaign (*see: this issue: For the Record: Nationwide*). Each time, the library restocked the display after she left.

The patron also challenged the titles *Harriet Gets Carried Away* by Jessie Sima and *Bathe the Cat* by Alice McGinty due



to their depictions of families with gay parents.

The library retained both books.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Artesia, New Mexico

On May 10, Valerie Martin, director of Artesia Public Library, denied her teen services librarian's request to create displays for Pride Month. Numerous patrons had requested displays both in person and on Facebook.

The library had put up Pride Displays prior to 2021. The staff member was written up for insubordination when they informed Martin of an online petition calling for the library to resume Pride Displays.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Almond, New York

On February 17, the Alfred-Almond Central School District received a request to reconsider Marjane Satrapi's graphic novel *Persepolis*.

The review committee recommended retaining the book.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Aurora, New York

In June, a principal in the Southern Cayuga Central School District instructed an elementary school library aide not to shelve the recently purchased copy of *Pink, Blue, and You! Questions for Kids About Gender Stereotypes* by Elise Gravel.

The librarian instructed her to shelve the title and reminded both the principal and the aide of the district's reconsideration policy which requires library material to remain available while undergoing review.

It is unknown if the book was retained.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Batavia, New York

The Richmond Memorial Library was invited to host a regional Pride association's Drag Queen Story Time event as part of a series of programs scheduled for Pride Month.

Starting on May 16, a local moms Facebook group and a local church group started encouraging people to call and email the library board to protest the event. During the following weeks, the library received around 40 complaints about the scheduled Drag Queen Story Time, some from their service area and some from as far away as Texas.

The event took place on June 11 as scheduled and 94 people attended.

At the June 13 board meeting, one person complained during the public comments section. The individual was not a resident of the library's service area.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Blauvelt, New York

On May 16, a parent of a South Orangetown Central School District middle school student submitted a formal request for reconsideration of *My Body, My Choice: The Fight for Abortion Rights* by Robin Stevenson. On the request form, they stated that the book was "intellectually and morally inappropriate for middle school children."

It is unknown if the book was retained.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Brewster, New York

On May 23, requested that the Brewster Central School District remove *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison from both the curriculum and from school libraries.

The outcome of this challenge is unknown.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Cicero, New York

Nine books that were part of the Black History Month display at Northern Onondaga Public Library were checked out from the display by a patron who complained that the library had "these types of books."

Many of the titles were in the Racial Justice in America series. The patron did not return the books until June 9 and when she did, she submitted requests for the reconsideration of all of the titles.

All of the books she challenged were retained by the library.

The titles involved were:

- *Atrocities in Action* by Kevin P. Winn
- *Desegregation and Integration* by Kevin P. Winn
- *Income Inequality and the Fight Over Wealth Distribution* by Elliott Smith
- *Indigenous Rights* by Virginia Loh-Hagan
- *Jim Crow and Policing* by Kevin P. Winn
- *Juneteenth* by Kevin P. Winn
- *LGBTQ+ Rights* by Virginia Loh-Hagan
- *Queer Heroes: Meet 52 LGBTQ Heroes from Past and Present!* by Arabelle Sicardi
- *Voting Rights* by Kevin P. Winn

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Hamilton, New York

On May 23, staff of the Hamilton Public Library discovered that four books had been defaced with "White Lives Matter" stickers. On June 6, an additional title was discovered.

Three of the books were about the lives and experiences of Black people and were written by Black authors. A fourth title was about the lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+). The final title was a



biography of Joseph Goebbels, Hitler's minister of propaganda.

The titles were:

- *Goebbels* by Ralf Georg Reuth
- *Roots* by Alex Haley
- *The Blood Trials* by N.E. Davenport
- *The Book of Pride: LGBTQ Heroes Who Changed the World* by Mason Funk
- *The Bridge: The Life and Rise of Barack Obama* by David Remnick

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Nesconset, New York

On June 21, the board of the Smithtown Special Library District voted 4-2 to "remove all Pride displays in addition to removing all books of the same subject on display from all Children's sections in all Smithtown Library buildings." Displays for Pride Month were still permitted in the Teen and Adult sections of the library.

The board's action was condemned by the New York Library Association and by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+) advocacy groups.

On June 23, the board held an emergency meeting and rescinded their earlier order. This motion also passed by a vote of 4-2. Board president Brianna Baker-Stines said the board "recognizes that our earlier decision was made without the time, care, and due diligence that a decision of this type deserves and that it was the wrong decision."

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge reports; Associated Press, June 23, 2022.

Patterson, New York

It was reported in July that after a policy incorporating the American Library Association's "Library Bill of Rights" was passed out of committee and recommended to the Carmel Central

School District's board of education for approval, the superintendent independently set a procedure granting parents the right to deny their children access to library materials.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Sloan, New York

On March 24, three librarians in the Cheektowaga Sloan Union Free School District received an email inquiring about whether or not four titles were available in school libraries.

The high school librarian responded that none of the titles were owned within the district. The principal told the librarian not to order them.

The titles were:

- *33 Snowfish* by Adam Rapp
- *Call Me By Your Name* by André Aciman
- *Hands Up!* by Breanna J. McDaniel
- *It's Perfectly Normal* by Robie H. Harris

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Stillwater, New York

In May, the parent of a Stillwater Central School District student submitted formal requests for the reconsideration of the books *Lawn Boy* by Jonathan Evison and *Gender Queer: A Memoir* by Maia Kobabe.

The complainant also requested a list of all books that contain "similar connotations on sexual issues" and all books that include the terms "fag, faggot, dick, pussy, asshole, cock, cunt, cocksucker, cum, cum dumpster, blow job, [and] vagina slime." Finally, she requested that her child be restricted from checking out any such titles from school libraries.

The books were reviewed by a reconsideration committee and retained.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Tompkins County, New York

On June 3, the Libs of TikTok Twitter account tweeted about an upcoming drag workshop series for teens at the Tompkins County Public Library. This spurred an influx of disparaging and harassing phone calls and emails from across the country to library staff and the presenter. These include allegations that staff were "pedophiles" and "groomers." Death threats were also received.

On July 2, Rocco Lucente attended a youth drag show event co-sponsored by the Downtown Ithaca Alliance that was held as part of the city's Pride Week. Lucente took video of the performance and of attendees without their permission and shared it on social media where he referred to it as a "child ritual sacrifice" and accused all involved of being pedophiles.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge reports.

Troy, New York

During the first week of June, a patron discovered that a graphic novel in the teens section of the Brunswick Community Library had been defaced. *Flamer* by Mike Curato has a gay main character. An unknown individual wrote a message inside the book stating, "Jesus loves you, get to know him."

The patron who discovered the message brought it to the attention of staff and expressed concern that teens might encounter it and be disturbed by what appeared to be a homophobic comment.

On June 8, a patron requested that the library reconsider the book *My Rainbow* by Neal Trinity, because it has a transgender main character.

The complainant said she represented a homeschool group and



requested that this book and all others like it be withdrawn or moved to a separate section to protect Christian parents.

The book was retained by the library.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Dare County, North Carolina

In November, 2021, print and digital copies of *Out of Darkness* by Ashley Hope Pérez were removed from all high school libraries in the Dare County Schools district.

The title was removed by superintendent John Farrelly after district board of education member Carl Woody asked him to do so, according to both Woody and assistant superintendent Keith Parker.

There was no formal request for the book's reconsideration, no review process, and no formal approval of this action by the board.

Reported in: *The Outer Banks Voice*, June 10, 2022.

Guilford County, North Carolina

On April 21, the pressure group Take Back Our Schools posted a video on YouTube of a mother reading an excerpt from *Life is Funny* by E.R. Frank.

The description of the video states that the book is available through the libraries of seven schools in the Guilford County Schools district. It states the book is "absolutely pornographic and needs to be take [sic] out of all the schools NOW."

On May 5, the school district received a formal request for the book's reconsideration. They subsequently received two additional challenges to it.

The book was retained.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Harnett County, North Carolina

On June 20, the Harnett County manager ordered the Harnett County Public Library to remove the word "Pride" and all book covers from their Pride Month display.

The county manager said that members of the Harnett County Republican Party saw the display when they were using the meeting room, and reported it to the county commissioners.

The only remaining parts of the display were the words "Summer Of" and construction paper fish and seashells in every color of the rainbow.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Macon County, North Carolina

During a June 7 budget work session, Macon County commissioner Paul Higdon said he would not support increased funding for Fontana Regional Library employee salaries because they put up a Pride Month display. "I cannot support increased funding to an agency with those displays," said Higdon.

He added, "If you want to celebrate divisive things like gay pride or whatever . . . do it on private property."

Higdon's remarks came in response to a proposal from commissioner Ronnie Beale to use the county's contingency fund to increase the library budget by \$20,000 in order to keep up with the inflation and help retain staff.

Several residents in attendance expressed disappointment and disapproval of Higdon's remarks. Hannah Higney Kruse referred to them as "childish and laughable."

Lifelong resident Chris Beasley, who came out as gay when he was 12, said "I think LGBTQ representation in Franklin has been on the backburner long enough."

Reported in: *Citizen Times*, June 13, 2022.

Mooresville, North Carolina

On April 26, the principal of the Brawley School sent an email to parents of students in the 6th grade language arts class informing them that they would not be finishing the book *Dry* by Neal Shusterman, due to complaints received from a group of parents.

Brawley is part of the Iredell-Statesville Schools district and their policy is to provide an alternate reading assignment when a parent objects to their child studying a book. Instead of following this policy, the book was dropped from the curriculum.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

New Hanover County, North Carolina

On May 19, parents of middle and high school students attending New Hanover County Schools alerted the police that school libraries contained "obscene and pornographic materials." The complaint included a list of nine titles.

New Hanover County Sheriff's office reviewed the books and submitted passages of interest to the District Attorney's office for legal review. District Attorney Ben David indicated the material was protected under the First Amendment and North Carolina law.

The books challenged were primarily about the lived experiences of individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+) and/or as Black, indigenous, or persons of color.

Titles challenged:

- *A Good Kind of Trouble* by Lisa Moore Ramée
- *All Boys Aren't Blue: A Memoir-Manifesto* by George M. Johnson
- *Forged by Fire* by Sharon Draper
- *Melissa* (previously published as *George*) by Alex Gino



- *Out of Darkness* by Ashley Hope Pérez
- *Queer, There, and Everywhere: 23 People Who Changed the World* by Sarah Prager
- *Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You* by Jason Reynolds and Ibram X. Kendi
- *The 57 Bus: A True Story of Two Teenagers and the Crime that Changed Their Lives* by Dashka Slater
- *The Glass Arrow* by Kristen Simmons

Reported in: WHQR, July 8, 2022.

Union County, North Carolina

On June 20, it was reported that Union County manager Mark Watson prohibited the Union County Public Library from hosting seminars from Union County Pride and from participating in the county's first Pride festival in September. They were also instructed to scale back Pride Month displays at all locations.

Union County Pride had partnered with the library to host a book club for teens and they had plans for a Drag Queen Story Time event.

In a statement, Union County commissioners said, "County administration determined it was prudent to review events the library was participating in, particularly ones we had not previously participated in. Further guidance on all events and program participation may be necessary."

Union County Pride president Cristal Robinson referred to Watson's actions as discriminatory.

Reported in: WSOC, June 20, 2022.

West Jefferson, North Carolina

On June 21, a county commissioner shared a complaint he received with the Appalachian Regional Library regarding a storywalk they set up of Todd Parr's *The Family Book*.

The complaint was that the book stated "some families have two moms or two dads." The commissioner asserted that the depiction of non-heterosexual parents was inappropriate.

In response, the library removed Parr's book from the storywalk and set up a different title. The book was retained in the library's collection, however.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Fargo, North Dakota

On April 25, the parent of a fourth grade student contacted the principal to complain about a library book with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+) characters.

On May 4, the parent met with the school's principal, librarian, and library program facilitator. The parent then submitted a formal request for the reconsideration of *Beetle & the Hollowbones* by Aliza Layne.

On the reconsideration form, the parent objects to a frame in which two characters of the same gender kiss and that the book is a "gateway to [a] magical world." They state that they found information online stating that "the book is LGBTQ."

The complaint continued, "I'm sorry you have no common sense or values" and that providing books like this "is child abuse and against the law."

The review committee met on May 18 to discuss the children's book. The school system retained the title.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Huron County, Ohio

On June 21, during the public comments section of the Huron County Community Library's board meeting, a parent voiced objections to the books *Fred Gets Dressed* by Peter Brown and *Llama Glamarama* by Simon James

Green, claiming that "both books are grooming our children to believe LGBTQ is appropriate."

The individual also submitted requests for reconsideration of both titles that same day.

The books were retained in the collection.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Johnstown, Ohio

On April 20, Shane Dawson's book *I Hate Myselfie: A Collection of Essays* was removed from a classroom library in the Johnstown High School (JHS) following a parent complaint. The parent then requested reconsideration of the title from the school library.

On May 25, a parent submitted a formal request for the reconsideration of *A Court of Mist and Fury* by Sarah J. Maas from the JHS library. The complainant was the husband of a school board member.

The outcomes of these challenges are unknown.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Mercer County, Ohio

On June 10, the Mercer County District Public Library received a request to reconsider the book *Icebreaker* by A.L. Graziadei because it was "homosexual in nature."

The book was retained.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Catoosa, Oklahoma

On July 8, a patron filed a request for the Catoosa Public Library to reconsider *Cats vs. Robots: This is War* by Margaret Stohl because it includes a non-binary character. On the reconsideration request, the patron indicated that if the book wasn't removed it should be marked with a sticker indicating that it has lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender,



queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+) content.

The book was retained.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Tulsa, Oklahoma

On July 28, Tulsa Public Schools (TPS) released a statement announcing they removed *Gender Queer: A Memoir* by Maia Kobabe and *Flamer* by Mike Curato from school libraries.

Their decision to withdraw the titles came after Oklahoma state education secretary Ryan Walters took to social media to criticize the presence of the books in TPS libraries. Walters made the posts while campaigning to become state superintendent of public instruction.

Reported in: Associated Press, July 28, 2022.

Salem, Oregon

In May, the grandparents of students attending West Salem High School in the Salem-Keizer Public Schools district submitted a request for the reconsideration of *Gender Queer: A Memoir* by Maia Kobabe. Neither they nor their grandchildren had read the title.

The request and the book were reviewed by a seven-person committee which included teachers, the district's safety coordinator, a city librarian, and a district resident. In June, they voted unanimously for the district to retain *Gender Queer* in high school libraries.

The anti-LGBTQIA+ "Libs of TikTok" account brought attention to the district's decision by posting about it on Facebook. After the post, several people spoke out against the book during the public comments section of the July 12 school board meeting and district employees began receiving vulgar phone calls and threats.

Reported in: Salem Reporter, July 15, 2022.

Bucks County, Pennsylvania

On June 10, a patron checked out every book that was part of the Pride display in the children's section of the Samuel Pierce branch of the Bucks County Free Library. The patron then emailed the library to inform staff that they checked the materials out in protest and would not return them "until Pride month is over and the display is taken down."

According to staff, the patron's actions and message seemed to follow the recommendations made in *Catholic-Vote*, instructing their readership to "Hide the Pride" (*see: this issue: For the Record: Nationwide*).

Library staff indicated that this was the second time a patron had checked out every book on the display, but the first time they received an email explaining the motives behind it.

The titles checked out in protest on June 10 were:

- *How to be Ace: A Memoir of Growing Up Asexual* by Rebecca Burgess
- *It Feels Good to be Yourself: A Book About Gender Identity* by Theresa Thorn
- *Little & Lion* by Brandy Colbert
- *Perfect Ten* by L. Philips
- *Princess Princess Ever After* by Kay O'Neill
- *Spellbound: A Graphic Memoir* by Bishakh Som
- *The Hips on the Drag Queen Go Swish, Swish, Swish* by Lil Miss Hot Mess

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Chester County, Pennsylvania

On July 5, the Chester County Library began receiving emails, phone calls, and posts on Facebook from people complaining about a Drag Queen Bingo event their Friends group was planning for September.

The complaints began two days after a staff member received an email inquiring if the library was going to have a Drag Queen Story Hour program from a woman who said they'd like to bring her kids if so. Promotion for the event hadn't begun.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Ephrata, Pennsylvania

On May 24, a patron submitted a request for the Ephrata public library to reconsider the PG-13 film *Jesus Henry Christ*. They claimed the title of the film was objectionable for "destroying one's faith" and "making fun of God's son."

The DVD was retained.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Honey Brook, Pennsylvania

On June 14, a mother of 4 challenged *Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You* by Jason Reynolds and Ibram X. Kendi at the Honey Brook Community branch of the Chester County Library System. She said that there "are no such things as races" and that the book was divisive.

The title was retained.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Mount Lebanon, Pennsylvania

During the week of June 19, the director of the Mount Lebanon Public Library received a patron complaint about the Pride Month display in the children's section of the library.

The patron characterized the display as "disturbing and perverse" and requested that it be taken down. They said they would not bring their children back while the display was up.

The library retained the display throughout Pride Month.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.



Saegertown, Pennsylvania

On May 9, approval to purchase new library books for the Penncrest School District was delayed due to objections from board member David Valesky.

Valesky contended the books focused too much on racism and that they promoted what he referred to as “the hate group Black Lives Matter.”

The books were never purchased.

The books Valesky objected to were:

- *A Shot at Normal* by Marisa Reichardt
- *Apple: Skin to the Core: A Memoir in Words and Pictures* by Eric Gansworth
- *Fat Chance* by Lesléa Newman
- *Finding Junie Kim* by Ellen Oh
- *Genesis Begins Again* by Alicia Williams
- *Global Citizenship: Engage in the Politics of a Changing World* by Julie Knutson
- *Nevertheless, We Persisted: 48 Voices of Defiance, Strength, and Courage*
- *Read Between the Lines* by Johanna Knowles
- *The Downstairs Girl* by Stacey Lee

Reported in: *The Meadville Tribune*, May 12, 2022.

Smithfield, Rhode Island

During the first week of May, formal reconsideration requests were submitted to Smithfield Public Schools for the books *A Place Inside of Me: A Poem to Heal the Heart* by Zetta Elliott, *Feed Your Mind: A Story of August Wilson* by Jennifer Bryant, and *Were I Not a Girl: The Inspiring and True Story of Dr. James Barry* by Lisa Robinson.

The books challenged dealt with issues of race and racism, and the lived experiences of Black and transgender individuals.

A review committee consisting of school principals, school librarians, and the assistant superintendent determined the books were age-appropriate

and should remain in library media centers. The superintendent agreed with the committee’s recommendations. The outcome was appealed to the board.

On June 6, the board voted 4-1 to uphold the prior recommendations and retain the books in elementary school libraries.

Reported in: *Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report; Smithfield School Committee Minutes, June 6, 2022;*

Richland, South Carolina

Every book was checked out from a Pride Month display at the Richland branch library of the Richland County Public Library (RCPL).

The patron left a letter templated on CatholicVote’s “Hide the Pride” campaign, an overtly homophobic and transphobic effort to “reclaim” public library spaces by removing children’s books with characters who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+). (*See: this issue: For the Record: Nationwide*).

In their letter, the patron said they would “keep these books checked out until the library agrees to remove the inappropriate content from the shelves.”

Tamara King, equity and engagement officer for RCPL, said the display would be restocked with titles.

Reported in: *The State*, June 17, 2022.

Sioux Falls, South Dakota

In April, a patron of Siouxland Libraries submitted a request for reconsideration of *How Do You Make a Baby?* by Anna Fiske, claiming that it contained “pornographic images.”

The library retained the book.

Reported in: *Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.*

Madison County, Tennessee

On June 14, a group of women led by county commissioner Cyndi Bryant entered the Jackson-Madison County Library (JMCL) to register a formal complaint against the library’s Pride Month display. Misreading the title of K-Ming Chang’s novel *Bestiary*, Bryant proclaimed, “This display is promoting bestiality!”

On June 15, the library director informed staff she’d had a meeting with multiple county commissioners and board members and that they were threatening to withhold funding from the library because of the display. She removed the books *Bestiary* and *Over the Top: My Story* by Jonathan Van Ness from the display, indicating they had specifically been focused on during the meeting.

The Pride display dominated discussion during the June 22 board meeting, with numerous members of the public speaking out against it and in its defense. Board director Greg Jordan stood behind staff and the library display, however. “The display stands and will not be taken down,” said Jordan.

Reported in: *Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report; Jackson Sun*, June 26, 2022.

Nashville, Tennessee

On July 18, the Instagram account kendall_in_kentucky posted a video titled “hide books” in which she read excerpts from *Flamer* by Mike Curato out of context and listed the school libraries in Nashville that carry it. She called on her followers to call the schools and demand the book’s removal.

The twelve high schools in the Metro Nashville Public Schools district that held the book retained it on their shelves.

Reported in: *Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.*



Ector County, Texas

On June 6, a parent and her children walked out of a two-person production of *Treasure Island* performed at the Ector County Library. The woman went to the managing librarian's office to challenge the play on grounds that the female actor's portrayal of male characters was an act "against God" which could cause "earthquakes, hurricanes, and wildfires."

The managing librarian listened to the woman's concerns and allowed the production to continue.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Fort Bend County, Texas

In late Fall of 2021, Beth Martinez, chief academic officer for Fort Bend Independent School District (ISD), drove to both campuses that held *Gender Queer: A Memoir* by Maia Kobabe and removed the copies. The books were not returned.

In January, Martinez was promoted to deputy superintendent. At an April board meeting, it was announced that a request for reconsideration of *Gender Queer* had been received. A Freedom of Information Act request revealed that the form was submitted by Martinez while she was still chief academic officer.

The challenge form requested the removal of the book from both district high school libraries that owned it, Dulles and Lawrence E. Elkins, indicated that the book had not been read by the complainant, and stated that it is "illegal to expose children under 18 to pornographic materials."

The book was withdrawn from both libraries.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Granbury, Texas

On March 19, the Granbury Independent School District received a formal

request for the reconsideration of *Bloody Horowitz* by Anthony Horowitz. The complaint was submitted by a parent whose daughter checked the book out from a school library and expressed concerns over depictions of violence in the book.

The title was withdrawn.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

McKinney, Texas

On June 25, members of the Proud Boys gathered outside of a Pride-themed family storytime held at a branch of the McKinney Public Library (MPL). The Proud Boys wore masks and tactical gear. Several carried bear spray and one openly carried a pistol. One was caught on camera pushing a counter-demonstrator and was issued a citation.

On June 12, Proud Boys members had protested a drag queen brunch event at the library for those who were 21 and older.

Gillian Barnstetter, a communication strategist with the ACLU, said "These are clearly part of a rising tide of hatred and I'm afraid to say that I don't know how it ends or where it goes."

Proud Boys did not gain access to MPL during either of their Pride Month protests.

Reported in: *The Real News Network*, June 29, 2022.

Melissa, Texas

On May 10, the Melissa Public Library and Melissa city council received an email from an individual without a library card claiming that *Gender Queer: A Memoir* by Maia Kobabe was "child pornography." They included a link to a TikTok video of the book being challenged during a school board meeting as evidence.

The library retained the title.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge reports.

Rockwall, Texas

In April, administrators of the Rockwall Independent School District instructed librarians to remove 21 titles from all school and classroom libraries. Of these, 13 were to be immediately withdrawn from the online catalog and 8 were to be considered "under review" and only made available with parental permission.

No requests were received for the reconsideration of these titles and the district's formal review procedure was not followed.

Titles permanently withdrawn:

- *A Court of Mist and Fury* by Sarah J. Maas
- *A Court of Thorns and Roses* by Sarah J. Maas
- *All Boys Aren't Blue: A Memoir-Manifesto* by George M. Johnson
- *Crank* by Ellen Hopkins
- *Flamer* by Mike Curato
- *L8r, G8r* by Lauren Myracle
- *Looking for Alaska* by John Green
- *Me and Earl and the Dying Girl* by Jesse Andrews
- *Milk and Honey* by Rupi Kaur
- *Out of Darkness* by Ashley Hope Pérez
- *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* by Stephen Chbosky
- *This One Summer* by Jillian Tamaki and Mariko Tamaki
- *Tricks* by Ellen Hopkins

Titles removed from the shelves for review:

- *A Quick & Easy Guide to Queer & Trans Identities* by Mady G
- *Beyond Magenta: Transgender Teens Speak Out* by Susan Kuklin
- *Eleanor & Park* by Rainbow Rowell
- *Fade* by Lisa McCann
- *Keeping You a Secret* by Julie Anne Peters
- *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison
- *The Glass Castle* by Jeanette Walls



- *TTYL (Talk to You Later)* by Lauren Myracle

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge reports.

Tyler, Texas

In February, a patron of the Tyler Public Library requested the formal reconsideration of *Blue is the Warmest Color* by Julie Maroh due to its depictions of “two women engaging in sexual acts.” He complained the library was making it accessible to children even though it was shelved in the adult collection.

The graphic novel was retained.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Richfield, Utah

On November 17, 2021, the assistant superintendent of the Sevier School District sent an email calling for the removal of *Looking for Alaska* by John Green from all school libraries, citing sexual content akin to what Utah legislators were working to remove from schools.

On March 24 HB 374 pertaining to “sensitive materials in schools” was signed into law. (See: Journal of Intellectual Freedom and Privacy, v.7 iss.2: *For the Record: Utah*). This appears to have been a preemptive effort to comply with it.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

South Salt Lake City, Utah

On May 20, the board of the Granite School District instructed all district schools to remove every book from a list of 35 titles from their libraries.

The books were neither formally challenged nor reviewed by a committee. Instead, the board stated that they were in violation of HB 374, “Sensitive Materials in Schools,” which went into effect on May 4, 2022. (See: Journal of

Intellectual Freedom and Privacy, v.7 iss.2: *For the Record: Utah*).

The books withdrawn from district libraries in response to HB 374 were:

- *A Court of Mist and Fury* by Sarah J. Maas
- *A Court of Silver Flames* by Sarah J. Maas
- *Allegedly* by Tiffany Jackson
- *Almost Perfect* by Brian Katcher
- *Angus, Thongs and Full-Frontal Snogging* by Louise Rennison
- *Beyond Magenta: Transgender Teens Speak Out* by Susan Kuklin
- *Brazen: Rebel Ladies Who Rocked the World* by Pénélope Bagieu
- *Breathless* by Jennifer Niven
- *Crank* by Ellen Hopkins
- *Damsel* by Elana K. Arnold
- *Eleanor & Park* by Rainbow Rowell
- *Forever* by Judy Blume
- *Impulse* by Ellen Hopkins
- *Infamous* by Elana K. Arnold
- *L8r, G8r* by Lauren Myracle
- *Laura Dean Keeps Breaking Up With Me* by Mariko Tamaki
- *Lucky* by Alice Sebold
- *Me and Earl and the Dying Girl* by Jesse Andrews
- *Melissa* (previously published as *George*) by Alex Gino
- *Monday's Not Coming* by Tiffany Jackson
- *Push* by Sapphire
- *Red Hood* by Elana K. Arnold
- *Sold* by Patricia McCormick
- *The 57 Bus: A True Story of Two Teenagers and the Crime that Changed Their Lives* by Dashka Slater
- *The Black Flamingo* by Dean Atta
- *The Haters* by Jesse Andrews
- *The Poet X* by Elizabeth Acevedo
- *The Truth about Alice* by Jennifer Mathieu
- *Thirteen Reasons Why* by Jay Asher
- *This One Summer* by Jillian Tamaki and Mariko Tamaki
- *Tilt* by Ellen Hopkins
- *Triangles* by Ellen Hopkins

- *Tricks* by Ellen Hopkins
- *TTYL (Talk to You Later)* by Lauren Myracle
- *What Girls Are Made Of* by Elana K. Arnold

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Springville Public Library, Utah

On June 15, a patron of the Springville Public Library submitted requests for the reconsideration of the board books *Being You: A First Conversation About Gender* by Megan Madison and *The Pronoun Book* by Chris Ayala-Kronos.

The books were reviewed and retained.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

West Jordan, Utah

On May 3, a parent of a 6th grade student submitted book challenge forms requesting the Jordan School District to reconsider *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison, *What Girls Are Made Of* by Elana K. Arnold, and *Milk and Honey* by Rupi Kaur.

The books are held in district high school libraries, but not in the school that the student attends.

The Bluest Eye was retained. *What Girls Are Made Of* and *Milk and Honey* were withdrawn.

On May 9, an individual who does not reside within the school district and does not have any children enrolled in district schools, submitted requests for the West Jordan Middle School to reconsider *Monday's Not Coming* by Tiffany Jackson and *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas.

The outcomes of these challenges are unknown.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge reports.



Albemarle County, Virginia

On April 25, a parent emailed a complaint about the book *A Court of Mist and Fury* by Sarah J. Maas to two librarians and a principal at Albemarle County Public Schools. The parent requested the book's removal due to a sexually explicit scene in it. The high school library held a print copy in Spanish and provided access to the English text through their ebook platform.

A librarian met with the principal to discuss the book and the district's reconsideration policy. The principal removed the print copy without waiting to receive a formal request for the title's reconsideration or referring it to a committee for review.

The principal also recommended removal of the ebook to district officials as it is part of a shared collection.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Arlington, Virginia

On April 1, Arlington Public Schools received a complaint via email from a parent who did not want her kindergarten to have access to a book held in district high school libraries. She requested a copy of the reconsideration form so she could challenge *Gender Queer: A Memoir* by Maia Kobabe.

Ultimately, the parent refused to submit the form, as she did not want to read the book, which is a prerequisite for initiating the reconsideration process.

Kobabe's memoir was retained.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Chesapeake, Virginia

On May 25, Chesapeake Public Schools Library Supervisor instructed librarians to remove *A Court of Mist and Fury* by Sarah J. Maas from all high school libraries.

The book's removal was undertaken not in response to a complaint from a parent in the school district, but rather because a neighboring district withdrew the title after it was challenged there.

On May 26, it was reported that *Gender Queer: A Memoir* by Maia Kobabe was also removed. Elizabeth Haskins, Great Bridge High School assistant principal, said it was removed after they received a written complaint from a district parent.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report; 13 News Now, May 26, 2022.

Goochland County, Virginia

On January 27, Goochland County Public Schools received a formal request from a school board member to reconsider *#MurderTrending* by Gretchen McNeil citing concerns that it was sexually explicit.

The principal reviewed the title and determined it should remain on the library shelf. The school board member did not appeal the outcome.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Henrico County, Virginia

On March 12, a parent submitted a request for Henrico County Public Schools to reconsider *A Good Kind of Trouble* by Lisa Moore Ramée. The district has 33 copies of the novel, 16 at elementary schools and 6 at middle schools.

The novel is about a 12-year old Black girl who stands up to authority after she gets in trouble for wearing a Black Lives Matter armband to school. The complainant alleged that the book supported a "Marxist group" and was written to "indoctrinate" students.

On May 3, the day after *Henrico Citizen* published an article about the challenge, the complainant withdrew their request. A review committee had been

formed on March 13 and the review process was well underway at the time.

Reported in: Henrico Citizen, May 2, 2022, and May 4, 2022.

Loudoun County, Virginia

In May, Loudoun County Public Library director Chang Liu canceled a library-sponsored program on gender identity. Staff were informed that going forwards, all programs dealing with race, sexuality, or history would need to go through an approval process.

LCPL also implemented guidelines requiring library displays to represent "both sides" of all issues. As a result, staff were required to include a book on conversion therapy in their Pride Month display.

All staff were also instructed that it was forbidden to use the word "queer" in any library publications and the words "queer" and "gay" had to be removed from signage that was part of the Pride display. Staff were also told that any children's books in the Pride display needed to be moved to the highest shelves, so children would be less likely to see them and unable to reach them.

In June, the library board revised their policy to require parental permission for any minor to get a library card, making it more difficult for teenagers to access library materials.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge reports.

Prince William County, Virginia

On May 27, the parent of a child attending Prince William County Public Schools challenged three titles. They indicated they did not read the books, but discovered the books had characters who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+) by reading reviews on Amazon.



The titles challenged were: *Carlos Gomez Freestyles: Heavy on the Style* by Chuck Gonzalez, *Julian is a Mermaid* by Jessica Love, and *What Riley Wore* by Elana K. Arnold.

Also during May, another parent challenged the graphic novel adaptation of *The Giver* by P. Craig Russell and Lois Lowry due to its depiction of infanticide.

The outcomes of these challenges are unknown.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge reports.

Virginia Beach, Virginia

Virginia Beach City Public School (VBCPS) board member Victoria Manning and state house delegate Tim Anderson challenged the graphic novel series *Saga* by Brian K. Vaughan, *Gender Queer: A Memoir* by Maia Kobabe, and *A Court of Mist and Fury* in VBCPS libraries.

In response to Manning's endeavors, *Gender Queer* was withdrawn from district libraries despite having been formally challenged and retained last year (see: Journal of Intellectual Freedom and Privacy, v.7 iss.1: Success Stories: Schools: Virginia Beach, Virginia).

In the wake of Anderson's campaign to remove books from their school libraries, teachers and librarians at VBCPS received a significant volume of emails containing threats and allegations that they were breaking the law by providing access to the books.

In September, a VBCPS spokesperson released a statement acknowledging that "emails that have been perceived as threatening in nature were sent to multiple staff members regarding books in our schools. It is unconscionable that any member of our community would allude to 'retribution' in an attempt to intimidate members of VBCPS staff."

The spokesperson encouraged parents to adhere to the district's established procedures for challenging

materials if they take issue with any of the books in district libraries.

Reported in: 13 News Now, May 26, 2022, and September 13, 2022.

Tacoma, Washington

In March, a patron of the Tacoma Public Library objected to depictions of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+) characters in picture books generally. They submitted requests for the reconsideration of *Pride Puppy* by Robin Stevenson and *Pink is for Boys* by Robb Pearlman in which they alleged the books were a form of "brainwashing."

The titles were reviewed and retained where they were originally shelved.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Tumwater, Washington

On February 10, a patron of the Timberland Regional Library submitted a formal request for the reconsideration of *Watchmen: An HBO Limited Series*, due to bigotry, hatred, and obscenity.

The library retained the DVD series.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Wenatchee, Washington

Throughout March and April, the North Central Regional Library received complaints regarding both their physical and ebook copies of *Gender Queer: A Memoir* by Maia Kobabe. In each instance, the complainant was informed of the library's collection development policy and endorsement of the Library Bill of Rights. No one followed through by submitting a formal request for the book's reconsideration.

On June 2, executive director Barbara Walters was notified by the city council that a group had been organized around removing the book from the

library. A city council member asked Walters how the library could allow a "pornographic" book to be on the shelves while filtering internet access on public computers.

The physical and digital copies of Kobabe's memoir were retained.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Berkeley County, West Virginia

On April 29, a candidate for the school board submitted a request for Berkeley County Schools to reconsider *A Court of Mist and Fury* by Sarah J. Maas citing articles that they'd read "about inappropriate books in school libraries."

The book was retained.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin

A parent requested that *Neanderthal Opens the Door to the Universe* by Preston Norton be removed from a 9th grade reading list and from Chippewa Falls Area Unified School District libraries.

While the title was not specifically assigned, students were required to read five titles of their choice from the reading list it was included on.

During a meeting held on May 2, a review committee recommended keeping the book. The parent who submitted the request for reconsideration appealed the committee's decision.

On June 29, the school board decided to require a parent or guardian to sign a consent slip before any student under the age of 18 would be allowed to read the book.

Reported in: WEAU, May 2, 2022; The Chippewa Herald, June 30, 2022.

Greendale, Wisconsin

On June 2, the Greendale Public Library received a request to reconsider three titles by Patricia Polacco from the library. The complainant characterized



the books as “Russian propaganda” full of historical misinformation and appropriation of Ukrainian cultural heritage.

When staff went to review the items, they discovered that the library only owned one of the challenged titles. The decision was made to retain *Rechenka's Eggs*.

The titles which were challenged but not owned by the library were *Luba and the Wren* and *Babushka's Mother Goose*.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Luxemburg, Wisconsin

A parent requested reconsideration of Mike Curato's graphic novel *Flamer* at Luxemburg-Casso School District libraries. When school administrators elected to retain the title, the complainant appealed the decision to the school board.

The curriculum committee, which included three board members, met on May 3 to discuss the appeal of the administration's recommendation to retain *Flamer*. They voted unanimously to retain the graphic novel and place a moratorium on considering further challenges to it for five years.

Reported in: WBAY, Jul 13, 2022.

Pewaukee, Wisconsin

On July 12, a patron sent an email to the library director and a board member of the Pewaukee Public Library objecting to an upcoming teen program on Tarot.

The woman characterized cartomancy as evil and said that “divination is expressly forbidden in the Bible and its practice causes participants to turn away from God.”

An announcement that the program was canceled was made on July 14, less than two weeks before it was scheduled to take place.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Stoughton, Wisconsin

On April 28, the parents of a Stoughton Area School District high school senior sent a lengthy email in which they challenged and threatened to burn *Perfect Chemistry* by Simone Elkeles. They claimed the book was “smut,” “gross,” and “sent the wrong message to both boys and girls about losing their virginity.”

The librarian met with the parents, explained the library's policies and reconsideration process. The parents opted not to submit a formal request for the book's reconsideration, but asked that their other children

not be allowed to check out that title or any other book in the series. Notes were added to their patron records accordingly.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Wausau, Wisconsin

On April 11, the Wausau School Board voted to remove “sensitive topics” from the Wit and Wisdom English language arts curriculum for grades 3-5, citing concerns about “politically motivated” teachers.

The sensitive topics the board voted to exclude books on were race, racism, sexuality, and gender identity. Specific titles excluded from the curriculum were not reported.

Portions of the Wit and Wisdom curriculum were also targeted in Williamson County, Tennessee, and Oskaloosa, Iowa.

(See: Journal of Intellectual Freedom and Privacy, v. 7 iss.2: *Censorship Dateline: Schools: Oskaloosa, Iowa*; v.7 iss.1: *Censorship Dateline: Schools: Williamson County, Tennessee, and Success Stories: Schools: Williamson County, Tennessee*; v. 6 iss.4: *Censorship Dateline: Schools: Williamson County, Tennessee*).

Reported in: Wausau Pilot and Review, April 12, 2022.



SUPREME COURT

On June 24, the Supreme Court overturned the core reproductive rights cases *Roe v. Wade* and *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* in a 6-3, revoking a constitutional right that existed for 50 years.

The decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, 597 U.S. ___ granted states the full power to legislate any aspect of abortion rights not preempted by federal law. The decision brought trigger laws banning abortion into effect in 13 states. Several additional states had passed abortion bans which were blocked by the courts.

The immediate impact this unprecedented rollback of civil rights had is difficult to overstate. However, the implications extended far beyond the 52% of women of childbearing age in the US who were deprived of long-standing rights almost overnight.

For women who live in states with laws banning abortion, fears of digital surveillance, including by telecoms, health and period-tracking apps, and license plate cameras are real and justified.

Lydia Brown, policy counsel with the Center for Democracy and Technology said people are right to be concerned about what could happen when private corporations or government entities can access personal data, "especially when that data could put people in vulnerable and marginalized communities at risk for actual harm."

Andrea Ford, a research fellow at the University of Edinburgh, said "It becomes really muddy when you get into abortion." Ford asks, when abortion is outlawed in some states, "does that transcend the right to privacy that is written into the contracts in the way that child trafficking would?"

The potential decline of civil liberties resulting from the Court's decision doesn't end there.

In his concurring opinion, Justice Clarence Thomas indicated that other

rights were now also up for reconsideration, including same-sex marriage, which was granted in the Supreme Court's 2015 decision in *Obergefell v. Hodges*, 567 U.S. 644.

Thomas asserted that since the Court determined that the constitution's Due Process Clause does not secure any other rights in the *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* decision, that logic should apply elsewhere.

"In future cases," wrote Thomas, "we should reconsider all of this Court's substantive due process precedents, including *Griswold*, *Lawrence*, and *Obergefell*."

The Supreme Court's decision in *Griswold v. Connecticut*, 381 U.S. 479 (1965) held that the Constitution granted married couples the right to purchase and use contraceptives.

In *Lawrence v. Texas*, 539 U.S. 558 (2003), the Court ruled that most so-called "sodomy laws" which provided for criminal punishment for consensual, adult, non-procreative sexual activity were unconstitutional.

In their dissent, Justices Elena Kagan, Sonia Sotomayor, and Stephen Breyer cautioned that, "No one should be confident that this majority is done with its work. The right *Roe* and *Casey* recognized does not stand alone. To the contrary, the Court has linked it for decades to other settled freedoms involving bodily integrity, familial relationships, and procreation . . . They are all part of the same constitutional fabric, protecting autonomous decision making over the most personal of life decisions."

The dissenting opinion concluded, "Either the mass of the majority's opinion is hypocrisy or additional constitutional rights are under threat. It is one or the other."

Reported in: *The Washington Post*, June 24, 2022, and June 26, 2022; *The Hill*, June 24, 2022; NPR, June

24, 2022; *The New York Times*, July 13, 2022.

On June 27, the Supreme Court ruled 6-3 that the Bremerton School District violated the First Amendment rights of high school football coach Joe Kennedy when it opted not to renew his contract for praying at the 50-yard line after games.

In their decision in *Kennedy v. Bremerton School District*, 597 U.S. ___ (2022), the Court effectively overturned *Lemon v. Kurtzman*, 403 U.S. 602 (1971) and its prescribed test to evaluate whether or not government actions were in compliance with the establishment clause of the First Amendment.

The so-called "Lemon test" held that the government should not do anything that might signal to religious dissenters that they are outsiders.

Lawyers for the district argued that Kennedy's prayer practice was not personal, but undertaken in full view of students as part of a school event. The district offered Kennedy a place to pray off the field, but Kennedy refused this accommodation.

In her dissent, Justice Sonia Sotomayor wrote that, "the District emphasized that it was happy to accommodate Kennedy's desire to pray on the job in a way that did not interfere with his duties or risk perceptions of endorsement."

According to Richard Katskee, a lawyer for Americans United for Separation of Church and State, Kennedy instead "insisted on audible prayers at the 50-yard line with students . . . [and] announced in the press that those prayers are how he helps these kids be better people."

Sotomayor asserted that coaches serve as role models and students seeking coach Kennedy's approval and a stronger letter of recommendation for college recruiting would be inclined to follow the behavior he modeled. "The



record before the Court bears this out,” wrote Sotomayor.

Justice Neil Gorsuch said that students “were not required” to join Kennedy in prayer and rejected concerns shared by parents that their students felt “coerced” to do so.

Justices Elena Kagan and Stephen Breyer joined Sotomayor in dissenting.

Reported in: CNN, June 27, 2022; *Education Next*, June 27, 2022.

On May 2, the Supreme Court unanimously ruled that the city of Boston violated the First Amendment when it refused an application to fly a Christian flag on a flagpole in front of city hall in September 2017. In the past 12 years, the city had approved 284 requests to use the flagpole and had only denied the one made by Camp Constitution.

The crux of *Shurtleff v. City of Boston*, 596 U.S. ___ (2022) was whether or not flags flown on that particular pole represented private speech in a public forum or government speech.

The court determined that the flags flown on the communal pole did not constitute speech of the city. Subsequently, allowing a group to raise a religious flag would not violate the establishment clause of the First Amendment.

In his opinion, Justice Stephen Breyer wrote that the city created a public forum by allowing private groups to use its flagpole, so the city’s refusal to allow “Camp Constitution [to] fly their flag based on its religious viewpoint violated the free speech clause of the First Amendment.”

Justice Samuel Alito wrote that “Government speech occurs if, but only if, a government purposefully expresses a message of its own through persons authorized to speak on its behalf.”

Reported in: *The New York Times*, May 2, 2022; *SCOTUSblog*, May 2, 2022.

CIVIL RIGHTS Nationwide

On June 21, the US District Court for the Northern District of California quashed a subpoena to reveal the identity of an anonymous Twitter user on the grounds of copyright infringement.

Anonymous Twitter user, @CallMeMoneyBags, criticized private-equity billionaire Brian Sheth in a series of six tweets accompanied by photos.

On October 29, 2020, days after the tweets were posted, Bayside Advisory LLC petitioned Twitter under the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) to take the posts down claiming they had copyright ownership of the photos.

On November 2, Bayside registered its copyrights to the photos. Twitter consented to take down the photos, but left the tweets. Bayside then obtained a subpoena under the DMCA for Twitter to disclose information identifying the operator of the @CallMeMoneyBags account.

Twitter filed a motion to quash the subpoena, arguing that it would violate the First Amendment rights of the account owner to do so.

In the opinion for case 20-mc-80214-VC, Judge Vince Chhabria quoted *McIntyre v. Ohio Elections Commission*, 514 U.S. 334, 342 (1995), that an “author’s decision to remain anonymous, like other decisions concerning omissions or additions to the contents of a publication, is an aspect of the freedom of speech protected by the First Amendment.”

Chhabria explained that “to defeat Twitter’s motion to quash, Bayside must first state a prima facie case of copyright infringement. If it can do so, the Court must weigh the potential harm to Bayside if the subpoena is not enforced against the potential harm to MoneyBags if his identity were revealed to Bayside.”

Chhabria determined that Bayside failed to establish a prima facie case of copyright infringement.

Finally, Chhabria wrote that, “even if Bayside had made a prima facie showing of copyright infringement, the Court would quash the subpoena in a heartbeat.”

In their write-up of the case, the Electronic Frontier Foundation stated that “The reality is that copyright law is often misused to silence lawful speech or retaliate against speakers.” They celebrated the District Court’s decision, which “ensures that DMCA subpoenas cannot be used as a loophole to the First Amendment’s protections.”

Reported in: Electronic Frontier Foundation, June 21, 2022.

On July 8, the 9th US Circuit Court of Appeals upheld most of the Arizona Department of Corrections, Rehabilitation, and Reentry’s (ADCRR) policy banning inmates from accessing sexually explicit materials.

In the opinion in *Prison Legal News v. Charles L. Ryan* (2:15-cf-02245-ROS), Judge Eric Miller wrote that banning “content that graphically depicts nudity or sex acts” was allowable as it helps the administration “mitigate prison violence.”

The Human Rights Defense Center, which publishes *Prison Legal News*, claimed the prohibition violated inmates’ First Amendment rights and was “not rationally related to [ADCRR’s] stated goals of rehabilitation, reduction of sexual harassment, and prison security.”

Prison Legal News is sent to inmates in more than 3,000 institutions nationwide. Starting in 2014, issues that contained court documents detailing correctional officers sexually assaulting inmates were redacted or withheld from distribution in Arizona prisons.

In her now-overturned 2019 ruling, Judge Roslyn Silver found that



ADCRR's policy "violates the First Amendment on its face."

The 9th US Circuit Court of Appeals did find that the part of the policy prohibiting content "that may, could reasonably be anticipated to, could reasonably result in, is or appears to be intended to cause or encourage excitement or arousal or hostile behaviors, or that depicts sexually suggestive settings, poses, or attire," was overly broad.

The court also found that "mere mentions of sexual violence," such as that which was included in coverage of a New Mexico prison riot in *Prison Legal News*, should not have been censored.

(See: *Journal of Intellectual Freedom and Privacy, v.6 iss.2: Censorship Deadline: Prisons: Florence, Arizona*).

Reported in: *Cronkite News*, July 8, 2022.

EBOOKS

On June 13, the US District Court for the District of Maryland found that a law requiring book publishers to offer public libraries reasonable licensing fees for ebooks and digital audiobooks was "unconstitutional and unenforceable because it conflicts with and is preempted by the Copyright Act."

In *Association of American Publishers, Inc. (AAP), v. Brian E. Frosh* (DLB-21-3133), AAP argued that Maryland's

law interfered with publishers' rights to decide how to distribute their works. While other state legislatures are considering similar bills, at the time Judge Deborah Boardman made the ruling, it was the only such statute in effect.

The law was intended to protect libraries from being overcharged by publishers to license ebooks. Libraries are often charged as much as three times what consumers pay for the same ebook licenses. It passed in May, 2021, and was scheduled to go into effect in January. AAP filed a lawsuit to block it in December, 2021, and received a preliminary injunction on the law on February 16.

Reported in: *Reuters*, June 14, 2022.



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