

# FREE PEOPLE READ FREELY

## THE BOOKLET

Warning! Books may be taken out of context if not read in their entirety. Read books from cover to cover before challenging.



## SUPPORT THE RIGHT TO READ!



WE SUPPORT EVERYONE'S  
FREEDOM TO READ (OR NOT  
READ) WHATEVER THEY WANT!

SECURITY PUBLIC LIBRARY STANDS IN SOLIDARITY  
WITH AUTHORS, READERS, AND LIBRARIANS ACROSS  
THE COUNTRY WHO FACE DAILY CHALLENGES AND  
ATTEMPTS TO BAN THEIR BOOKS.

LEARN MORE IN THE FOLLOWING PAGES.



# KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS

 **First Amendment:** provides that “Congress make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting its free exercise. It protects freedom of speech, the press, assembly, and the right to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”

 **Fourteenth Amendment:** “No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.”

 **Intellectual freedom:** “gives people the right to think for themselves. It respects individual dignity and self-rule. This freedom allows people to form their own ideas and opinions by questioning the world around them.... Protection of this freedom assures every person’s right to form their own ideas and opinion.”

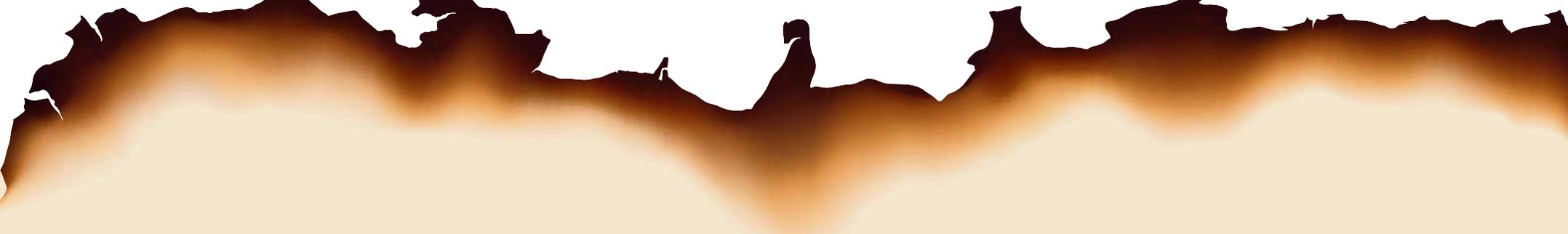
 **Book Challenge:** an attempt to remove or restrict materials, based upon the objections of a person or group.

 **Book Ban:** the removal of challenged materials.

 **Censorship:** Limiting or removing access to words, images, or ideas. The decision to restrict or deny access is made by a governing authority; this could be a person, group, or organization/business. Censorship by the government is illegal.

(Definitions courtesy of: [constitution.congress.gov](http://constitution.congress.gov) and [ala.org](http://ala.org))

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# INTRODUCTION

## Burned, Doxxed, and Banned:



Attempts at  
censorship in  
today's public  
libraries

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# INTRODUCTION

Have you ever read a book that has just “spoken” to you? One that has resonated with you in such a way that you still think or talk about it months or years later, recommending it to all of your friends? A book that has broadened your view of the world, made you more resolute in your ideals, or “seen” you in a way nothing or no one else in your life has?

Now imagine that you were never able to read that book. That it had been banned by a group or individual, deeming the content was too inappropriate for anyone to read and had it permanently removed from the library by people who did not know you or your life experience, but felt they knew what was in your best interest. No need to imagine anymore. This is a reality for millions of people around the country.

In the following pages, you will read about the foundation on which your Right to Read stands. Rights that are outlined in the Constitution, supported by the American Library Association, and fought for every day by the librarians at your local library. You will learn of the threats to those rights and learn what you can do to help.

As people deeply entrenched in the world of libraries, we hear stories on a daily basis that shock us. Reports of books being banned at an alarming rate, librarians’ lives and freedom being threatened for advocating for their communities, libraries being defunded, and whole collections of books becoming inaccessible because of arbitrary laws and court rulings not made with the good of the entire community in mind.

For Banned Book Month this year, we decided to bring these stories to you to advocate for those under attack; to be a voice for our colleagues, fellow readers, and favorite authors. We hope you will join us in standing up for not only *your* Right to Read, but *everyone’s*. Thank you.

## DISCLAIMERS BEFORE WE BEGIN:

1. We are not experts in constitutional law, nor are we First Amendment scholars. The following is a reading of the information we found from readily available resources.
2. We are, as always, remaining neutral on the politics of this issue. From our research, we found that both sides of the political aisle have called for the banning of books they deem inappropriate.
3. This is not an exhaustive list of events from around the country, there was no way for us to cover them all without making this booklet into an actual book. For more information, please see the Sources page and keep exploring this topic for yourself!

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# INTRODUCTION



## The State of the United States - 2023

### TOP 10 MOST CHALLENGED BOOKS OF 2023

The American Library Association documented **1,247 attempts to censor** materials and services at libraries, schools, and universities in 2023. Of the **4,240 unique titles** that were challenged or banned in 2023, here are the top 10 most frequently challenged.



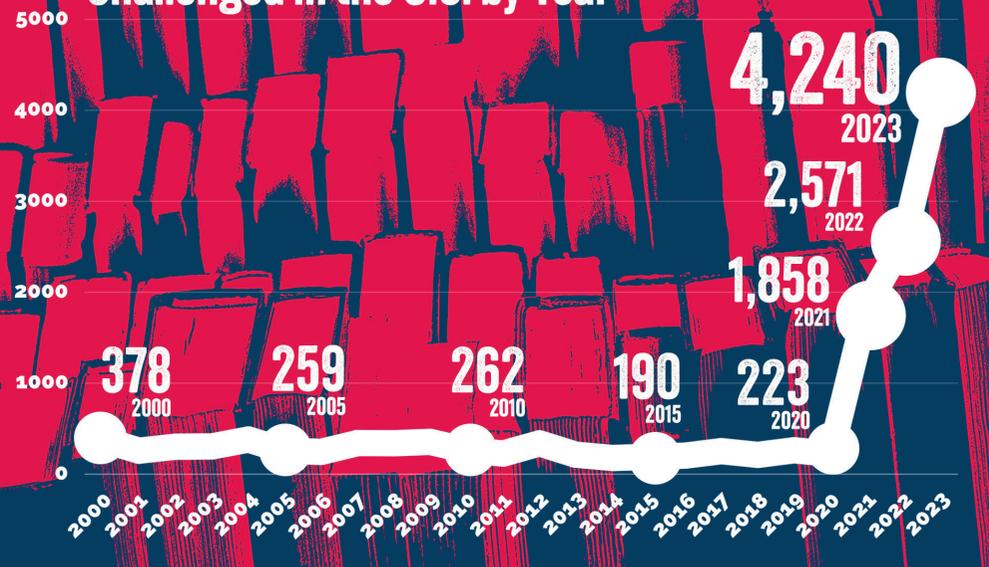
- |   |  |   |   |  |
|---|--|---|---|--|
| <b>1</b>  | <b>2</b>   | <b>3</b>  | <b>4</b>  | <b>5</b>   |
|   |  |   |   |  |
| <b>GENDER QUEER</b><br>by Maia Kobabe<br><b>REASONS:</b> LGBTQIA+ content, claimed to be sexually explicit              | <b>ALL BOYS AREN'T BLUE</b><br>by George M. Johnson<br><b>REASONS:</b> LGBTQIA+ content, claimed to be sexually explicit | <b>THIS BOOK IS GAY</b><br>by Juno Dawson<br><b>REASONS:</b> LGBTQIA+ content, sex education, claimed to be sexually explicit | <b>THE PERKS OF BEING A WALLFLOWER</b><br>by Stephen Chbosky<br><b>REASONS:</b> claimed to be sexually explicit, LGBTQIA+ content, rape, drugs, profanity | <b>FLAMER</b><br>by Mike Curato<br><b>REASONS:</b> LGBTQIA+ content, claimed to be sexually explicit |
| <b>6</b>  | <b>7/8</b>   | <b>9</b>  | <b>10</b>   |  |
|   |  |   |   |  |
| <b>THE BLUEST EYE</b><br>by Toni Morrison<br><b>REASONS:</b> rape, incest, claimed to be sexually explicit, EDI content | <b>ME AND EARL AND THE DYING GIRL</b><br>by Jesse Andrews<br><b>REASONS:</b> claimed to be sexually explicit, profanity  | <b>TRICKS</b><br>by Ellen Hopkins<br><b>REASONS:</b> claimed to be sexually explicit, drugs, rape, LGBTQIA+ content           | <b>LET'S TALK ABOUT IT</b><br>by Erika Moen and Matthew Nolan<br><b>REASONS:</b> claimed to be sexually explicit, sex education, LGBTQIA+ content         |  |
|   |  |   |   |  |
| <b>SOLD</b><br>by Patricia McCormick<br><b>REASONS:</b> claimed to be sexually explicit, rape                           |  |   |   |  |



Graphics courtesy of:

<https://www.ala.org/bbooks/bannedbookweek/ideas>  
[andresources/freedownloads](https://www.ala.org/bbooks/bannedbookweek/resources/freedownloads)

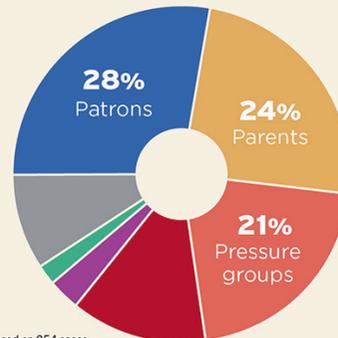
### Number of Unique Titles Challenged in the U.S. by Year



### CENSORSHIP BY THE NUMBERS



#### WHO INITIATES ATTEMPTS TO CENSOR BOOKS?



Statistics based on 954 cases.

- 13%** Board/administration
- 3%** Librarians/teachers/staff
- 2%** Elected officials/government
- 9%** Other/unknown

In 2023, organized pressure groups used their power to try to empty library shelves of all books they deem inappropriate.

ALA.ORG/BBOOKS

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# CHAPTER 1

## The Triple Threat: The First Amendment, ALA, and SPL

Standing up for  
your  
Right to Read!



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# CHAPTER 1



The American Library Association (ALA) asserts: “The freedom to read is guaranteed by the Constitution. Those with faith in free people will stand firm on these constitutional guarantees of essential rights and will exercise the responsibilities that accompany these rights.”

For more information on the ALA’s stance on Intellectual Freedom, Freedom to Read, and your library rights - please visit their website at [ala.org](http://ala.org)

## And now, a word from our policies...

The choice of [engaging with] library materials by users is an individual matter. Responsibility for the reading or viewing of materials by children and adolescents rests with their parents or legal guardians. The library does not stand in loco parentis. While a person may reject materials for himself or herself and for his or her children, he or she cannot exercise censorship to restrict access to the materials by others.

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### Purpose of the Collection within the Context of the Mission

A library is identified and defined principally by its holdings of materials and information resources. The library acts to fulfill its mission by selecting, acquiring, organizing, preserving, maintaining, deselecting and providing access to a collection of materials and electronic resources that address the interests and needs of the diverse members of its community. The Security Public Library strives to provide a collection that balances viewpoints across a broad spectrum of opinion and subject matter in formats suitable to a variety of learning and recreational interests and skills. The Library Board of Trustees affirms the American Library Association’s Library Bill of Rights, Freedom to View Statement, and Freedom to Read Statement, in support of acquiring and managing collections.

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### Criteria for Selection

The primary goal of material selection is to provide the best possible collection with the financial resources available. The evaluation of materials is characterized by flexibility, open-mindedness and responsiveness to the changing needs of the residents that Security Public Library serves. Materials are evaluated as a whole and not on the basis of a particular passage or passages.

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# CHAPTER 2

Wait... what? Book  
burnings are still a  
thing?



Hey, George Orwell!  
Are we in 1984?  
I see Fahrenheit 451  
over there!!!



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## 🔥 CHAPTER 2 🔥

The burning of books to either suppress ideas or make a political statement is not a new phenomenon. As far back as 213 B.C., there are reports of texts being destroyed by oppressive regimes. Here are some present day examples:

In early 2022, a pastor in Mount Juliet, Tennessee held a massive bonfire in which copies of “Twilight” and “Harry Potter” were burned. A little over a month later, a trailer with approximately 200 bibles was burned at the church’s doorstep. If you think both of these acts were abhorrent, you are correct!



TENNESSEE



MISSOURI

In February of 2024, a Republican candidate for Missouri Secretary of State posted a video of herself online burning books with a flamethrower.

### Book Burnings in the Digital Age

According to a New York Times article, the retail giant Amazon felt the heat after removing Adolf Hitler’s “Mein Kampf” from its listings. Reportedly, they yielded to public pressure to remove the title, then shortly after had to reinstate it after accusations of censorship.

This leads to a greater concern for book lovers everywhere - as more resources become available digitally, how easy will they be to delete from history? Who will have this power and what parameters will they use to decide what books should or should not exist?

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# CHAPTER 3

## Legal Trouble for Libraries

Attacks from every  
direction:

Courts, local  
governments, and  
private citizen groups



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# CHAPTER 3



**Over the next few pages, you will see many references to materials being “obscene.” What a subjective word! What one person finds to be obscene may be perfectly fine to another. Let’s look at the Supreme Court’s interpretation and the legal decisions behind what can be considered “obscene.”**

In 3 different court cases, the Supreme Court established the Miller Test to determine if something is “obscene.” All three prongs must be satisfied in order for this label to apply:

The three-pronged Miller test is as follows:

1. Whether the average person, applying contemporary adult community standards, finds that the matter, *taken as a whole*, appeals to prurient interests (i.e., an erotic, lascivious, abnormal, unhealthy, degrading, shameful, or morbid interest in nudity, sex, or excretion);
2. Whether the average person, applying contemporary adult community standards, finds that the matter depicts or describes sexual conduct in a patently offensive way (i.e., ultimate sexual acts, normal or perverted, actual or simulated, masturbation, excretory functions, lewd exhibition of the genitals, or sado-masochistic sexual abuse); and
3. Whether a reasonable person finds that the matter, *taken as a whole*, lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value.

*\*Italics applied by author for emphasis.*

Food for thought....

Michigan Public Library Association makes a good point when they say: “Obscenity is determined by the court of law. Federal law prohibits the possession with intent to sell or distribute obscenity, to send, ship, or receive obscenity, to import obscenity, and to transport obscenity across state borders for purposes of distribution (18 U.S.C.) Therefore, libraries cannot purchase obscenity on the open market and thus cannot have it on their shelves.”

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# 🔥 CHAPTER 3 🔥

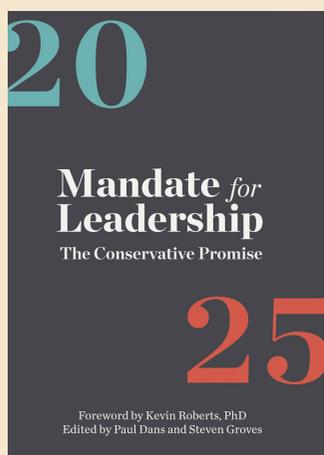
## Wait...I thought you said the government couldn't infringe on Freedom of Speech...

Under House File 2176 (introduced), persons affiliated with a school or public libraries distributing materials “obscene or harmful to minors” could be convicted of an aggravated misdemeanor, but then would be elevated to a Class D felony for a previous offense. The penalty for the misdemeanor can be up to two years in prison and a fine between \$625 and \$6,250. The felony carries a punishment of up to five years in prison and a fine between \$750 or \$7,500.



In Arkansas, a new law (SB81, now Act 372) could see librarians and teachers facing up to six years in prison and fines of up to \$10,000 if they distribute materials deemed obscene or harmful to minors. Luckily, a federal judge is currently blocking this law.

Amanda Jones, a school librarian in Livingston County Parish, was harassed, doxxed, and made into a pariah in her hometown. She spoke at a library board meeting where she stood up for the freedom to read and, within days, there were posts on social media calling her a pedophile and accusing her of distributing pornography. Instead of giving up, she dug in her heels and joined the nationwide fight for intellectual freedom by becoming a spokesperson in the anti-censorship movement. Read her book “That Librarian: The Fight Against Book Banning in America” - available at Security Public Library.



“Pornography, manifested today in the omnipresent propagation of transgender ideology and sexualization of children, for instance, is not a political Gordian knot inextricably binding up disparate claims about free speech, property rights, sexual liberation, and child welfare. It has no claim to First Amendment protection. Its purveyors are child predators and misogynistic exploiters of women. .... The people who produce and distribute it should be imprisoned. Educators and public librarians who purvey it should be classed as registered sex offenders. And telecommunications and technology firms that facilitate its spread should be shuttered.” (Project 2025, p. 38)

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# CHAPTER 3



## Race and Gender Identity

According to the American Library Association, the most targeted books in 2021 were those “by or about black or LGBTQIA+ persons.”

A book review list challenging the titles in the collection at a Madison, Alabama library showed that “91% of 233 titles had the words ‘lesbian’, ‘gay’, ‘transgender’, ‘gender identity’, or ‘gender non-conforming’ in the subject header, which lists numerous themes for each book.”

Suzette Baker was fired from a library in Llano County, Texas after refusing to give into demands that she keep a copy of “Critical Race Theory” behind the front desk instead of on the shelves with the rest of the collection\*. After her dismissal, the books were moved. A judge ordered that all copies removed from the shelves be returned, saying that it violated the First Amendment. The library’s board threatened to defund the library system until more that 100 citizens showed up in protest.



\*Authors note: According to librarian ethics, this would be a form of censorship. Not having materials owned by the library accessible to the public, is therefore censoring it.

Brooky Parks was fired from High Plains Library District because she organized anti-racist and LGBTQ programs for teens. She filed a civil rights complaint and was awarded \$250,000.



Mari-Louise Gay had her book added to the list of “sexually explicit” books that would potentially be moved from the children’s section. Her book ended up on this list simply because, when searching through the collection, her last name was flagged. The book was not on the list because of content, simply because a search for “gay” produced it in the results.

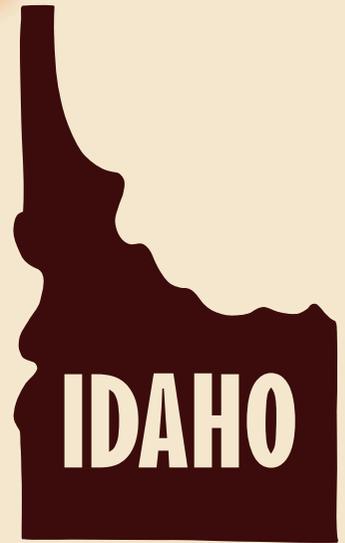


At Ozark Public Library, staff had to close down for an entire month so that they could review, individually, 8,000 children’s and young adult books to make sure they complied with new guidelines. In the end, only a few books were removed because of issues such as wear-and-tear and not content.

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# 🔥 CHAPTER 3 🔥

## Oh, Idaho....



### From the ACLU Idaho:

In 2024, the Idaho state legislature passed a new law that censors library content. The new law, created by House Bill 710 (or “HB 710”), will force librarians in public schools and libraries to relocate books deemed “harmful” to youth to “an area with adult access only.” While we’ve seen similar bills introduced in previous legislative sessions, the 2024 library censorship bill is the first to be signed into law. The new law creates a three-step process for library materials complaints:

1. Youth under 18 or parents/guardians of youth under 18 can complain, in writing, to a library if they encounter materials “harmful” to minors;
2. The library has 60 days to review the written complaint and the book in question; if the book is deemed “harmful” to minors, the library must move the book to an adult-only section of the library;
3. If the library does not move the book and the book is deemed “harmful” to youth, the parent (or youth) that complained about the book can sue the library. The new law says parents that file these legal challenges, if successful, will be awarded at least \$250 in damages.

Idaho’s new library censorship law went into effect on July 1, 2024

Idaho’s new library law could limit the ability of youth to read about new topics. And because it censors materials based on their content and viewpoints, it violates youths’ rights to free expression.

Libraries are a cornerstone of American Democracy, ensuring that all people, regardless of their income, education, race, or geographic location, have free and open access to information and lifelong learning so they can meaningfully engage in civic life. Public libraries—because they are public institutions—are bound by the First Amendment of the United States Constitution.

- There's no formal review process for complaints against books.
- This is a huge strain on small and underfunded libraries that don't have the infrastructure or support to remodel their existing libraries so that they may be in compliance with the law. The “adult” section must be cordoned off from children and young adults, meaning small libraries have to choose between getting rid of the entire adult collection as so not to be in violation of the law or not allowing children in the building. One library, that is literally only one room, has teepees (with no books in them) outside for the children since they cannot be around adult books.



Image courtesy of (Courtesy of Liza Evans/Idaho Falls Library) <https://idahocapitalsun.com/2024/07/15/we-are-not-getting-rid-of-books-how-libraries-across-idaho-are-implementing-new-materials-law/>

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# CHAPTER 4

Leave it to the  
professionals



Trust me,  
I'm a  
Librarian!



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## 🔥 CHAPTER 4 🔥

As you've probably gathered from the occasional attempts and humor (or borderline bad dad joke's) in this booklet, Librarians are a quirky group. We strive everyday to create a fun, exciting, educational environment in which our community can discover, grow, and become greater versions of themselves.

That being said, it is important to note that we do take our jobs very seriously. We have spent thousands of dollars and hundreds of hours educating ourselves and honing our expertise. We stay up-to-date on current topics, read tons of professional publications, consult experts in our fields, and take countless hours of professional development in order to continue to provide the best quality library services to our community. We consult multiple sources to ensure that books are cataloged in the proper sections, are age-appropriate, and above all...not obscene! Just as you would not bring your car to your dentist to find out what's wrong with it, you should not ask politicians, lawmakers, and uncredentialed websites to do the job of Librarians. Leave it to the professionals and know that we always have your (and everyone else's) best interest in mind!



Following City Council Resolution No. 2023-41, books with sexual content cannot be accessed by anyone under 18 years old. This included everything from puberty books to the children's book "Once Upon a Potty."

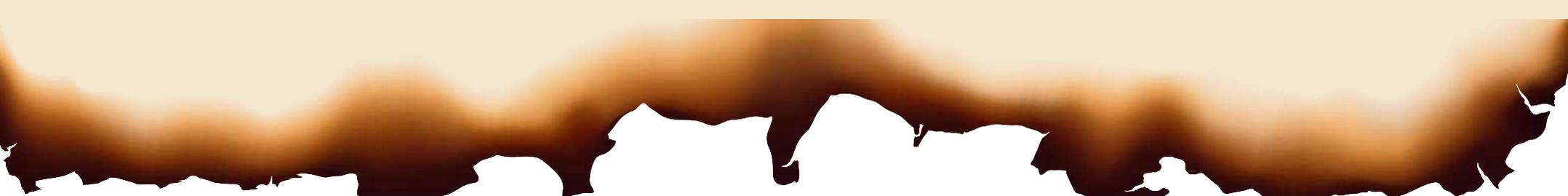
At Hamilton East Public Library, 1,385 books were moved from the "high school" collection to the adult collection, leaving just 474 books in the teen section.



The only library in Columbia County, was threatened with dissolution after a series of challenges by residents and voters about "sexual content" in the collection. One director refused to cave into the groups' demands and, after he resigned, the interim director moved the entire young adult nonfiction section to adult nonfiction.



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# CHAPTER 5

## Hope

Once you learn to  
read, you will be  
forever free.  
-Frederick Douglass

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# 🔥 CHAPTER 5 🔥



## Let's hear it for Colo-RAD-o!!

On May 31, 2024 Colorado's Governor Jared Polis and members of the state legislature signed *SB24-216 Establishing Standards for Decisions Regarding Library Resources*. This bill ensures that the decision making is given back to the professionals - the Librarians who have dedicated their lives to ensuring everyone's right to read. It protects all of us (readers, librarians, and authors alike) from facing some of the nightmare scenarios we've seen happening around the country.

Way to go Colorado! Hopefully more states will enact similar legislation before more harm is done!

The Colorado Association of Libraries list the primary provisions of this bill as:

- Protections for Colorado libraries from book bans;
- Assurances that resources cannot be removed from public libraries unless in accordance with a public library board's policy, and establishes safeguards for such policies;
- Requirements that public libraries establish written policies for the acquisition, retention, and display of public library sources, as well as their removal upon the request of a patron;
- Safeguards so that resources cannot be removed from a public library based on the demographics of the author or based on partisan disapproval of the topic;
- Protections for librarians from retaliation, discrimination, or termination for refusal to remove any resource if such removal is not in accordance with the board's policy; and
- Requirements that a person who requests that any material be removed must live within the service area of the public library, and their requests are public under the Colorado Open Records Act.

## Things you can do:

1. Not to state the obvious, but **read banned books!** Any time you hear of a challenge or ban on a book, reach out to your local library and request a copy. If they don't have one in the collection, request that it be purchased. Find out why it is being banned.
2. **Read broadly!** Is there something you would like to explore? A demographic or culture that you are curious about? There's a book for that! Knowledge is power.
3. **Choose books** that are right for you and your family. Allow other families to have access to what is right for them.
4. **VOTE!!** Not just in presidential elections, but every election.
5. **Get involved!** There are plenty of organizations out there with great ideas on how to help or that need your voice!
6. **Start a family book club!** Librarians are more than happy to secure more than one copy of a book for you so you may read and discuss it as a family.
7. **Share** this (or other information) with the people in your life.

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## (AND AFTER ALL YOU HAVE LEARNED, WE HOPE YOU DO TOO!!)

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As Librarians, we will always encourage you to check the sources. Here are ours:

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