

# DIVERSITY IN **PUBLICATION**



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“WHAT DIVERSITY ADVOCATES ARE WORKING FOR IS AN INDUSTRY THAT HONESTLY, ACCURATELY AND EQUITABLY REPRESENTS THE WORLD WE LIVE IN.”

**MIKE JUNG**

AUTHOR OF UNIDENTIFIED SUBURBAN OBJECT

# INTRODUCTION

For myself, grade school was always a struggle when it came to reading and writing. I tended to switch vowels, my p's and q's, b's and d's, etc. Even with a mom as a teacher for 20+ years, I built up an anxiety around those topics resulting I stayed away from reading and never fell in love with it until I read the Percy Jackson Series in middle school. For the first time, I felt like I related to a character. Percy Jackson had similar issues with reading and writing and was the same age as myself. I connected to it and never forgot it. To this day, it still is one of my favorite series because I felt seen and, of course, wanted to be a demi-god.

In high school I was a part of teacher cadet program where I would spend one hour in a classroom to learn about the profession. With a mom who has been teaching for 20+ years, I already had an idea of what to expect. During my second year of the program, I chose to be in a 3rd grade classroom for the one hour, 5 days a week. I got to help mentor the students, problem solve social and educational issues, and most importantly develop relationship with each of them.

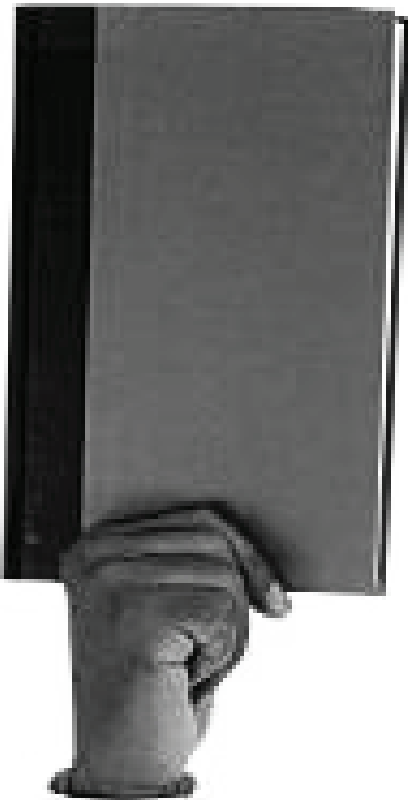
One day I entered the classroom and was informed that it was a free day to read, catch up on homework, or do other educational activities. Due to me coming in later in the day, most kids had made up their work and moved into reading. One student, a young African American girl, asked me to read with her. I agreed and had a book ready to go for her after she had finished her current task. We sat down in one of the corners away from the other silent readers and other groups to not be distracting to them. While the title I cannot remember the reaction on the little girls face impacting my trajectory and goals.

"Wait, she looks like me!" she pointed at the cover with a young African American girl on the cover with a similar hairstyle to the girl next to me. Her smile was the largest I had seen. Her face glowed with excitement.

"She does look like you! What other books have characters that look like you?" I asked seeing if we could recall any other titles that she had read previously.

"Um.. I don't know?" She seemed to be thinking harder than any kid should think. At least one other book should come to their mind with a character that reminded them of themselves, whether it is based on skin color, religion, or the way they think. Instead, the title she gave me was one that was a memoir or bibliography picture book about a historical figure. For myself I could name titles on my fingers of books that had or showed characters that looked and felt like me, maybe not how I learn or a disability I had but close enough to feel represented enough.

In college, I started off as an education major before transferring to an art school to pursue graphic design. The reason for the switch started with a class about diversity in literature. Each week the professor would roll a cart of books that represented different minority groups and would lay them on the table. We would take one book to read and talk with other students about the one they had. Some



weeks, like one that dealt with race but only used animals and inanimate objects as characters, had stacks of books that covered the table. Other weeks we had just enough books to barely cover the tabletop. It was disheartening to see a lack of diversity with groups that had a lot of important history not being told.

That class sparked something inside me, like the experience that I had in middle school with Percy Jackson and the 3rd grade student. I want to improve that industry, be more involved in a place that opens mind to feel like when they read it reflects reality. At my new school, I found a passion for typography and the publishing industry devoting multiple projects to developing conceptual campaigns and magazines that focused on highlighting the issues of diversity in the industry.

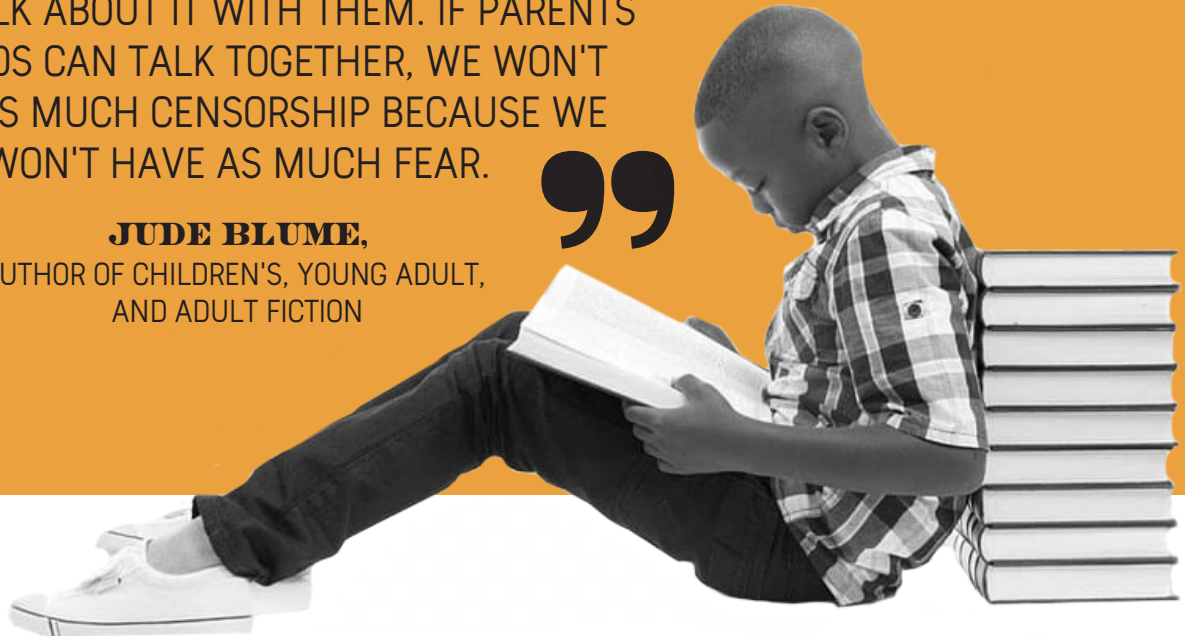
Then came the mass book banning's started to get traction in more conservative states. Attacking the slow progress that has already been made. With states passing laws preventing certain topics, like LGBTQ+ or one's sexuality, to be taught or talked about to minors has taking titles off the shelves of libraries. Which has led to parents and students feeling like they are being restricted due to political or religious beliefs.

So...

## HOW ARE BOOK BANS IMPACTING **DIVERSITY IN PUBLICATION?**

“LET CHILDREN READ WHATEVER THEY WANT AND THEN TALK ABOUT IT WITH THEM. IF PARENTS AND KIDS CAN TALK TOGETHER, WE WON'T HAVE AS MUCH CENSORSHIP BECAUSE WE WON'T HAVE AS MUCH FEAR.”

**JUDE BLUME,**  
AUTHOR OF CHILDREN'S, YOUNG ADULT,  
AND ADULT FICTION



# DEMOGRAPHICS OF READERS.

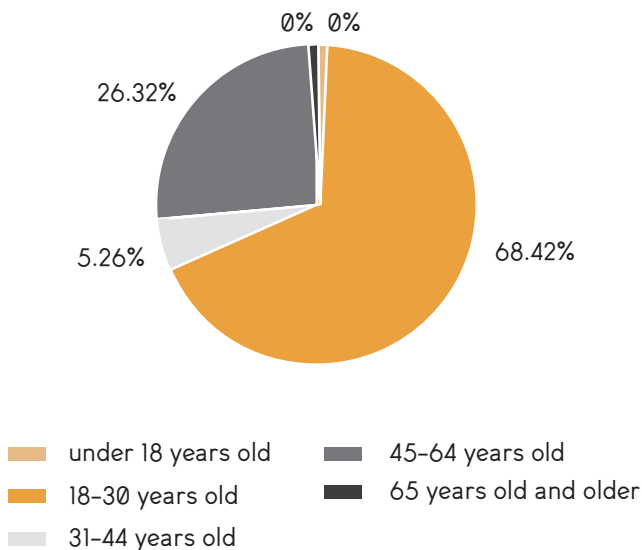
In the study I conducted, it helped give insight on how one may respond to book bans and see what demographics are willing to participate in the conversation. While many can walk into a bookstore and make assumptions about who might care, it is easier to make decisions when there is concrete data. It can begin mapping out the language to use, the images to incorporate, and the points that can be most important to them in future campaigns.

This study included 20 people, 14 who identified as female (68.42%), 6 that identified as male (31.58%), and none identified as non-binary. Comparing this group to a larger scale from a Zippia report on reader demographics, it showed a very similar split with 64% of readers identifying as a female and 36% as a male.

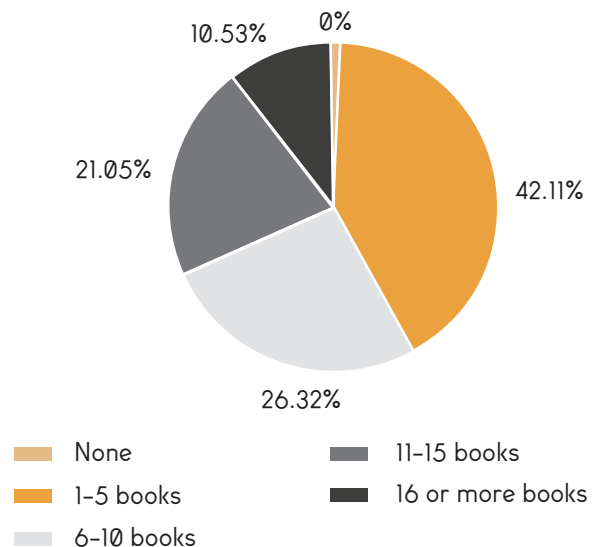


Out of this group, 68.42% fell into the young adults ranging from 18 years old to 30 years old. Placing them in the cusp of the last millennials and first few years of generation Z. With many of these kids growing up with similar experiences of shows, toys, and school behavior, we can imagine that they have a different outlook on accessibility to banned items with this group being the first to experience the rapid technology advancements and understanding how easy it can be to find information. This also is the introduction to eBooks and audiobooks, as we saw and were a part of the start of the "Print is dead" rhetoric with the lowest number of printed books sold in 2012 with 691 million units sold (McLoughlin). This group also experienced the peak of the Covid pandemic that interrupted a lot of lives with ending of high school, college, and starting stages of a career. Many reached for new hobbies and the publishing industry saw an all-time high of physical copies sold in 2021 in the last 10 years with 843 million units (McLoughlin). This increase in reading can be correlated to an average of books being read per year by Americans, which is currently 12 books (Irisreading.com). With this in mind we see that majority, 42.11%, of the participants from my polling fell into the category of 1-5 books. Which is a great place to fall when life can be intense. It also shows that even into adulthood the participants are actively trying to read with 0% responding with 0 books being read.

**WHAT AGE GROUP DO YOU FALL INTO?**



**HOW MANY BOOKS DO YOU READ IN A YEAR?**





# UNDERSTANDING BOOK BANS.

Now, let's get into understanding what book banning is, the causes behind them, and the censorship happening in states. Book banning is not a new topic to the publishing world. Starting centuries ago, starting with mass book burning in 213 B.C.E. with religions and political movements, leading to mass whipping of cultures (Harvard). Today bans have become more popular to carry out the power of protecting our minds to fit into what the current power wants. Usually, books fall into at least one of these three topics that causes books to be banned:

## 1 RELIGIOUS

Many titles that fall into this category usually are being challenged based on themes that go against one's religious beliefs. For example, many of the LGBTQ+ titles have been pulled from shelves because it has been identified as going against "Christian values."

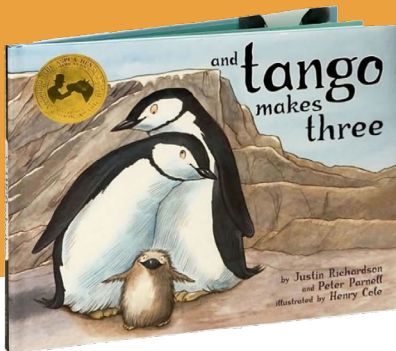
## 2 MORALS

Titles that fall under this category tend to have themes about sexuality or are too violent for certain age groups. An example would be *50 Shades of Grey* by E. L. James, being read as a classroom lesson or to an age group that is not mature enough to read.

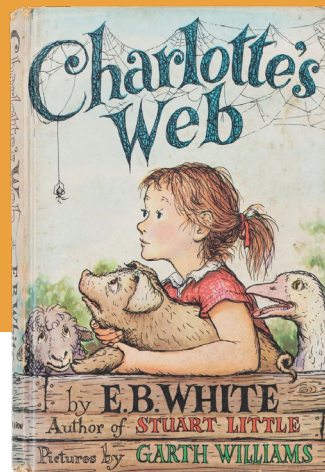
## 3 POLITICAL

Books that deal with challenging the power in place or goes against what the current power believes, falls into this group. In many cases these books deal with themes of uprising, history that is from a different lens/point of view that is in current books.

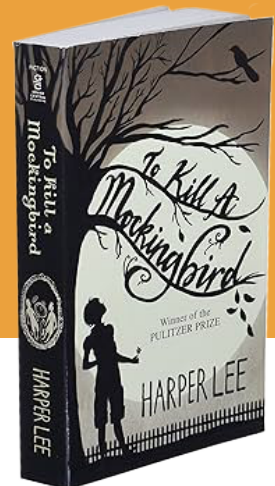
## EXAMPLES OF BOOKS THAT ARE BANNED.



Banned due to themes of death and the main character talking to animals (Jones).



Banned due to themes of death and the main character talking to animals (Bush).



Banned due to the use of racist words and themes around rape (Buhain).

I BELIEVE A LOT OF INDIVIDUALS WANT TO CONTROL THE NARRATIVE IN THE UNITED STATES, MOSTLY TO ADVANCE THEIR OWN POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS INTERESTS.

**FEMALE, 18-30 YEARS OLD**

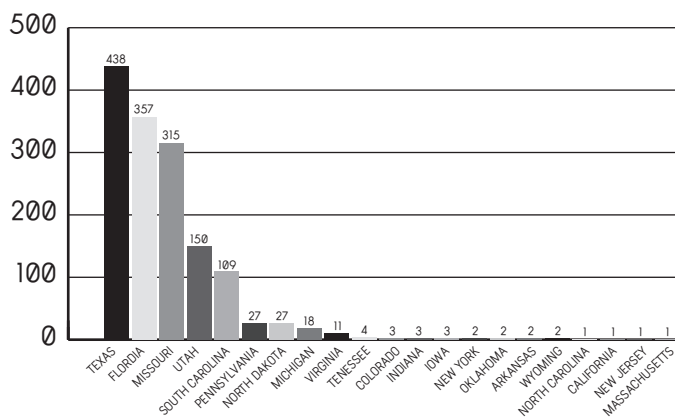
# CENSORSHIP LEFT TO THE STATES.

With books being pulled from shelves, we can see that there is going to be a learning curve in how we can access books that matter and interest us. While some states are less likely to ban titles, there are places where bans are at an all time high. With 438 books banned across the state of Texas, is just one example of how different states are handling censorship (Watson). Florida made headlines as 1,500 books were up to being banned because of the Parental Rights in Education Act, more commonly known as the "Don't Say Gay" law. This legislation is meant to target conversations about gender identity and/or sexual orientation for kids in kindergarten to third graders. In this case, we've seen school's stirp their libraries of books that could be considered as violation of these laws in fear of the consequences that could come later. Leaving more than just the k-3 kids confused on why they weren't able to find books at their reading level.

## NUMBER OF BOOKS BANNED BY STATE

JULY 1, 2022 TO DECEMBER 31, 2022

AMY WATSON



While books are the media that is being targeted, they aren't the only resources that are being harmed in this mass banning. While many have access to places like Barnes & Noble or Amazon, those who are unable to will have to experience limited titles due to their schools and public libraries being attacked too. Many are experiencing an increase in defamatory language, harassment, and threatening their safety and employment. Amanpour & Co. shared an 18-minute video, "How Libraries Became a Political Battleground", covering how a once save place to read has become a political hotspot to censor what is available to the public. According to video, every state is getting books challenged or banned no matter their political affiliation.

## WHERE DO CHALLENGES TAKE PLACE?

BASED ON 2022 STATISTICS  
BANNED & CHALLENGED BOOKS



**48%**  
PUBLIC  
LIBRARIES



**41%**  
SCHOOL  
LIBRARIES



**10%**  
SCHOOLS



**1%**  
COLLEGE LIBRARIES/  
OTHER PUBLIC  
INSTITUTIONS

This begins to question how libraries and schools will react to future issues. Lessa Kanani'opua Pelayo-Lozada, President of the American Library Association, says that the library workers have been struggling with the mental toll of handling the pandemic and being attacked by patrons who want the challenged titles pulled. With the potential burn out of the workforce, budgets are being cut.

Pelayo-Lozada explained a situation in Llano, Texas where a judge ruled for libraries to put the banned books back on the shelf. Due to that ruling, the city officials called an emergency meeting to try and defund that library, which would have closed its doors. To those in power, would rather take away access to books and other materials to the public. The community was able to protest and challenged the cities power and demonstrated the impact of those materials have on individuals.

CENSORSHIP IS TELLING A MAN HE CAN'T HAVE  
A STEAK JUST BECAUSE A BABY CAN'T CHEW IT.

MARK TWAIN



## BREAKING DOWN THE INDUSTRY.

Overall, the industry is known for being a very white dominated field with about 76% of publishing staff falling into that demographic according to a study done by Lee and Low (Cerezo). When it comes to authors, it even more white dominated with almost 95% of books being written by white authors (Tager, Shariyf). Year after year, Publishers are taking a stronger pledge to diversifying the industry. With majority of authors writing about their own culture, it leaves a lot of space for authors to begin using there platforms to include more characters of minority groups.

**24%**

OF PUBLISH STAFF

**33%**

OF ILLUSTRATORS

**24%**

OF AUTHORS

## IDENTIFY AS A PERSON OF COLOR.

Even though an average of 500,000 to 1 million books titles are published each year, there is a 1% chance that it will be stocked in a bookstore. Which ultimately means that finding new books with more challenging and diverse themes results in a harder chance of getting into the mainstream. In the past, the publishers selected, published, and marketed titles in every genre but now, a lot has changed. Many authors have turned into the marketer and selling to their community they have built. Along with a shift in who is doing the pushing, authors are likely to bring in an average of \$10,000 to \$50,000 in sales that ends up having to cover the new product development of the book, leaving the author with even less (Piersanti).

IF THERE ARE

**1,000,000**

BOOKS PUBLISHED IN ONE YEAR

ONLY

**10,000**

BOOKS MAKE IT INTO BOOKSTORES.

I THINK THAT DIVERSITY IN BOOKS IS IMPORTANT. REPRESENTATION IS POWERFUL, AND WHILE NOT EVERY BOOK HAS AN IDEA SET UP FOR EVERYONE TO BE INCLUDED I THINK IT MAKES THE STORY RICHER USUALLY.

**MALE, 18-30 YEARS OLD**



# WHAT ARE PUBLISHERS DOING?

Many publishers are started to work towards highlighting banned books, associations to donate to, and more. Some are doing more then others, but I believe there is always room to grow and produce more resources and campaigns to help this issue. Here are a three examples of publishing houses that are advocating against the book bans:

**Penguin Random House**, one of the top 5 publishing houses, has created a campaign that highlights the books they have published that are being attacked by challenges and bans across the country. Penguin Random house is taking the biggest stand with a dedicated page to offer more insight on what they are doing as a company. Included are the ways they are supporting authors, creators, librarians, teachers, and organizations that are need of more backing and allows user to help too. They also highlight the legal actions they are doing to help defend the books in courts. The publishing house has also provided amazing resources for different types of people, ranging from an everyday person to parents and creators.

**Macmillan** was similar to Penguin Random house with providing statistics, resources, ways to get involved, a list of books, and quotes from their own authors. I specifically liked their highlighted text "We believe everyone should have access to books and we actively support organizations that champion the freedom to read. We have always stood for promoting diverse perspectives and encouraging open dialogue, and we will continue to stand up for intellectual freedom and oppose any form of book banning." It shows the dedication to expanding and supporting literature that is representative of reality. The quotes from their authors helps show that they are all involved and want to see a change.

**HarperCollins** is looking a little weak compared to Penguin Random House and Macmillan as they have only pages highlighting their banned books you can buy and a page that was only utilized and pushed during banned book week. They do provide similar resources and tips on how to get involved.



# HOW IS BANNING GOING TO AFFECT ACCESSABILITY

66

I HAVE BEEN INCREDIBLY DISHEARTENED BY BOOK BANS IN THE UNITED STATES, ESPECIALLY IN SCHOOLS AND PUBLIC LIBRARIES. I BELIEVE BOOKS SERVE AS A VERY IMPORTANT OPPORTUNITY FOR READERS TO LEARN, GROW, AND EXPERIENCE DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES. DENYING THE PUBLIC ACCESS TO LITERATURE IS UNACCEPTABLE, ESPECIALLY WHEN IT COMES FROM A PLACE OF HATRED, BIGOTRY, OR PERSECUTORY IDEAS.

**FEMALE, 18-30 YEARS OLD**

99

One thing we can not assume, is having everyone have the same amount of access to internet, libraries, and books. With many students only able to get books at school, having titles pulled from a already small selection is hard to keep kids interested and engaged with want to continue to read. Having titles being available the handles topics that are relatable to people around us can help kids develop empathy and understanding on those topics. Having books that show different types of family units can foster relationships between kids who come from the oposite. As an adult, I realized that growing up in a divorced household was not the normal for my best friend whose parent were still happily married (and still are). Those moments could have helped other student find friends in similar situations or show kids who are from a different family type understand how there's differs from theirs.

## 2,571

BOOKS WERE BANNED OR CHALLENGED IN 2022.



THAT'S A **70%** INCREASE FROM 2021.

As the number of banned books climbs each year, there is a fear that more bans will happen due to laws being passed in states that have indentified as conservative. Leaving groups of minority being taking out of libraries and erasing them from being able to be read in schools. If more kids are understanding the gravity of the situation, the more likely parents can start to get involved with board meetings to help block bannings or help those who are looking to ban books understand why it is important. Kids and adults deserve to read books if parents and teacher deem it to be the correct level of maturity for the child. Another positive outlook to this sad journey, is that these bans are only at a state level. not all 400+ books banned in Texas are being banned or pulled off shelves in places like Maine.

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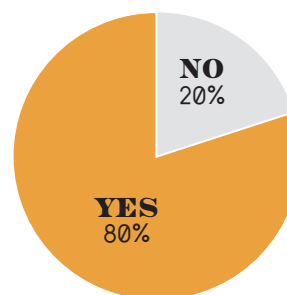
On one level I do think it will affect people's ability to find representation in books, but also in the age of the internet it doesn't seem possible for them to be fully "banned" really. Maybe the books won't be read as a part of class assignments or discussed but the information is still out there. I think the more worrying thing is that our knowledge of the books themselves will disappear.

**FEMALE, 18-30**

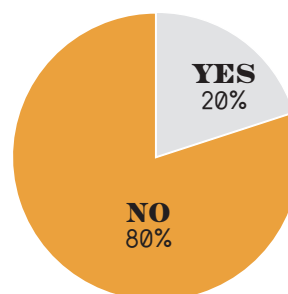
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In my survey, I asked a participants about is they identify as a minority and if they felt seen in books. With the exact same results, those 20% who identified as a minority also didn't see themselves in books. This means that the titles that do have the themes they are looking for are still not cully accessible to them in a way that they can openly say "yes, I'm representant." Another key factor into this portion was understanding that even though I suggested gender to be a consideration as a minority group, all by 2 of the 14 women said they were a minority. While this could be a coincidence, they seem to identify as a different minority (LGBTQ+). The other 2 were both males in the 45-64 age bracket. Which does check out when majority of novels are based on younger characters.

### DO YOU FEEL REPRESENTED IN BOOKS?



### DO YOU IDENTIFY AS A MINORITY?



## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Now your probably wondering, how can I help make this situation better? Through out this paper it is apparent that groups are wanting to take books off the shelf but, they are not educatign themselves correctly on the material or individuals rights. Here are some ways you can get involved:



### KNOW YOUR RIGHTS.

The first amendment protects your freedom to read. Everyone is entitled to their own opinions; these book bans are a way to limit your access to information and not knowing your rights can lead to more or stronger censorship.



## 2 STAY UP TO DATE ON BANNED BOOKS LIST.

By staying up to date on what books are being banned, you can make your own opinions by reading the books. Many books are currently being banned just because they are making assumptions and are never read by the groups being challenged.

In case you want to stay up-to-date on what books are being banned, here are a few resources to start your journey with:

- Barnes & Noble Banned Books: [https://www.barnesandnoble.com/b/banned-books/\\_/N-rtm](https://www.barnesandnoble.com/b/banned-books/_/N-rtm)
- PEN America: <https://pen.org>
- American Library Association's Banned & Challenged Books: <https://www.ala.org/advocacy/bbooks>

## 3 SPEAK UP & SPEAK OUT

Challenged books rarely succeed when a large amount of people speak out about it. Many cities are seeing boards and city officials targeting place that offer books being banned, you can attend these meetings to know what is happening in your own communities. If a petition is needed, think about signing and finding ways to advocate for the cause.

If you see books being taken off shelves that goes against policies of schools or is against your first amendment rights, report the censorship to these resources (Gomez):

- Report censorship to the **American Library Association** at <http://www.ala.org/tools/challengesupport/report>
- Report censorship to the **Comic Book Legal Defense Fund** by calling [1-800-99-CBLDF](tel:1-800-99-CBLDF) or emailing [info@cblddf.org](mailto:info@cblddf.org)
- Report censorship to the **National Coalition Against Censorship** at <https://ncac.org/report-censorship-page>
- Report censorship to the **National Council of Teachers of English** by completing the form at <https://secure.ncte.org/forms/reportcensorship> or by emailing [intellectualfreedom@ncte.org](mailto:intellectualfreedom@ncte.org)

## 4 SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONS THAT CAN HELP FIGHT.

You don't have to be in person to help support. Finding organizations, like the American Library Association or PEN America, to support can help them fund more banned book weeks, keep libraries open, and educate those in the communities that are being impacted the most.

Not only are they helping keep libraries open and making literature more accessible, they can help provide more resources to those who are working to keep books on the shelves. Those resource can range from funding low income community libraries, offer more mental health resources for them, and provide more options for events.

## FINAL THOUGHTS

We have a lot of ground to cover. From improving the industry and their own diversity within their workforce and the amount or involvement they are willing to put into mass banning to people allowing their minds to open to new topics. After all, not every single book is meant to be for every single person. We have to understand that just because one's political, religious, or moral stance on a topic, we should not be censoring another from reading about it.

That little girl I helped teach picked up more books after we finished the one I had read with her. She got a spark for reading more, understanding that all books can be fun to read. I began falling in love with reading and the entire publication industry. My dream is to work for a publishing house because of one book.

### One book.

One book can change an entire outlook of the world. If our books don't represent who and what or reality looks like, we will never be able to fully understand each other.

**Thank all the publishers, librarians, parents, and anyone who has dedicated their time to being able to fight against the negativity. Your work is not going unnoticed.**

# RESOURCES

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