

**ALA Intellectual Freedom Committee  
Report to Council  
2021 ALA Annual Conference  
Tuesday, June 29, 2021**

The ALA Intellectual Freedom Committee (IFC) is pleased to present this update of its activities.

## **INFORMATION**

### IFC Privacy Subcommittee

The IFC Privacy Subcommittee is reviewing and reorganizing its website, making it easier for visitors to navigate its many resources.

The website also includes the Voices for Privacy Blog. Since the 2021 Midwinter Meeting, the blog has published book reviews, perspectives from an electronic resources librarian, updates about California privacy laws, information on the right to be forgotten, and possible solutions to privacy scenarios. The Voices for Privacy Blog also published an overview of the “Resolution on the Misuse of Behavioral Data Surveillance in Libraries” and the discussion that took place at the ALA Council session at the 2021 Midwinter Meeting, as well as a two-part series on the concept of “information fiduciaries” that is referenced in the resolution.

The Institute of Museum and Library Services, in partnership with the American Library Association, has sponsored the creation of Privacy Field Guides. These practical how-to guides for making concrete privacy changes within libraries are now being tested by selected participants in academic, public, and school libraries. Among the grant objectives is the goal to help librarians become privacy advocates, giving them clear guidelines and discussion points for engaging with library leaders, vendors, boards, local government, and other stakeholders about privacy-related topics. At the 2021 ALA Annual Conference, leaders of the project, IFC Privacy Subcommittee Chair Erin Berman and Affiliate Researcher at Data & Society Bonnie Tijerina will host the on-demand session “Privacy Field Guides: Take Action on Privacy in Your Library.” The News You Can Use program will outline how library workers can use these guides, ask questions in a judgement free zone, and leave empowered to make privacy changes. To learn more about the guides, the Voices for Privacy Blog published “[Privacy Advocacy Guides for Libraries: An Interview with Erin Berman and Bonnie Tijerina.](#)”

## CENSORSHIP AND RECENT CHALLENGES

### Trends

Since 1990, the ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom (OIF) has been collecting data about banned and challenged library materials and services. ALA collects information from two sources: media reports culled from news outlets and social platforms; and reports submitted by individuals through the online form. The office presents Censorship Reports to inform members of trends and activities. From January 1, 2021 to May 17, 2021, OIF has tracked 110 unique cases. OIF provided support and consultation on 83 cases. The office has noted the following censorship trends:

- Challenges to anti-racist materials and critical race theory
- Challenges to staff diversity training
- Challenges to transgender children’s books and discussing pronouns

### Types of Challenges

Books & Graphic Novels	85
Films, Magazines, & Music	4
Programs	6
Displays	4
Other (Access, Artwork, Hate Crime, Online Resource, & Reading Lists)	11

### Snapshot of Recent Public Challenges and Bans

**Papillion-La Vista School District (Nebraska):** The Papillion-La Vista school board heard comments about the book, *Something Happened in Our Town: A Child’s Story About Racial Injustice* by Marianne Celano, Marieta Collins, and Ann Hazzard, which many parents [found offensive](#). In addition, the school board heard from the vice president of the education association, a school librarian, and later received statements from the Nebraska Library Association and the Nebraska Association of School Librarians.

**Westfield Washington Schools (Indiana):** At a Westfield Washington school board meeting, [parents and community members spoke](#) for nearly an hour during the public comment portion. Most of the comments, made both in-person and online, were on books about preferred pronouns and gender identity at the elementary schools as well the broader topics of discussing gender identity and diversity in schools. The books include *I Am Jazz* by Jazz Jennings and Jessica Herthel, *George* by Alex Gino, *Julian is a Mermaid* by Jessica Love, *Morris Micklewhite and the Tangerine Dress* by Christine Baldacchino, *One of a Kind*, *Like Me* by Laurin Mayeno, *It Feels Good To Be Yourself: A Book About Gender Identity* by Theresa Thorn, *They, She, He, Me. Free to Be* by Maya Christina Gonzalez.

**Leander Independent School District (Texas):** At a Leander Independent School District board meeting, a parent displayed a sex toy to shock the board and audience while complaining about the graphic novel, *In the Dream House* by Carmen Maria Machado. Since then all of the books on the Language Arts Reading List are being reviewed. So far [eight other books have been removed](#), including *My Friend Dahmer* by Derf Backderf, *Kiss Number 8* by Colleen AF Venable, Ellen T Crenshaw, *Laura Dean Keeps Breaking Up With Me* by Markio Tamaki, *Shirley Jackson's The Lottery: The Authorized Graphic Adaptation* by Myles Hyman, *Speak: The Graphic Novel* by Laurie Halse Anderson, *The Nowhere Girls* by Amy Reed, *The Handmaid's Tale (graphic novel)* by Margaret Atwood, and *Y, the Last Man, volume 1* by Brian K. Vaughan.

**Chicago Public Library (Illinois):** Officials with the Chicago Public Library system say that they will [pull six titles from children's author Dr. Seuss](#) from their shelves after a decision by the business that preserves the author's legacy to no longer publish those works. That decision was made because of depictions of characters with stereotypical imagery, according to the business. "These books portray people in ways that are hurtful and wrong," Dr. Seuss Enterprises said in a statement.

**Manitowoc Public Library (Wisconsin):** A Manitowoc County Board supervisor commented during the public input section of the Manitowoc Common Council meeting to [speak out against a program](#) at the library entitled "Privilege and Power." He claimed that the library is a "propagator of a political ideology."

**Lafayette Public Library (Louisiana):** A grant to fund books, two speakers and a discussion on voting rights history was [rejected by the Lafayette Parish Library board](#) whose members said the speakers were "extremely far left." The library was approved for a \$2,700 grant from the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities to be used for two discussion facilitators and the purchase of books as part of the LEH's "Who Gets to Vote?" library reading and book discussion program. The grant is part of the "Why it Matters: Civic and Electoral Participation" initiative, administered by the Federation of State Humanities Councils and funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

**Frisco Independent School District (Texas):** An optional reading challenge that encouraged high school students to read 10 books that "cover current topics faced in society" — namely

inclusion and gender equality — [was challenged by parents at Frisco ISD](#). Frisco ISD librarians introduced their version of the challenge, which was created by Cicely Lewis, a Georgia librarian who was the National School Librarian of the Year in 2020. After the challenge launched in Frisco, rumors began circulating on social media that the district was teaching its students critical race theory, which says laws and institutions perpetuate racial inequality. It has become a focal issue for conservatives, with state lawmakers recently introducing a bill that would ban schools from teaching it. The books selected by Frisco ISD librarians include: *Clap When You Land* by Elizabeth Acevedo, *Felix Ever After* by Kacen Callender, *The Voting Booth* by Brandy Colbert, *I Was Their American Dream: A Graphic Memoir* by Malaka Gharib, *Darius the Great is Not Okay* by Adib Khorram, *Slay* by Brittney Morris, *Take the Mic: Fictional Stories of Everyday Resistance* by Bethany C. Morrow, Jason Reynolds and Samira Ahmed, *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, *Frankly in Love* by David Yoon.

## INITIATIVES

### Top 10 Most Challenged Books of 2020

On April 5 during National Library Week, the Office for Intellectual Freedom published the list of the Top 10 Most Challenged Books of 2020:

1. ***George* by Alex Gino**  
Reasons: Challenged, banned, and restricted for LGBTQIA+ content, conflicting with a religious viewpoint, and not reflecting “the values of our community”
2. ***Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You* by Ibram X. Kendi and Jason Reynolds**  
Reasons: Banned and challenged because of author’s public statements, and because of claims that the book contains “selective storytelling incidents” and does not encompass racism against all people
3. ***All American Boys* by Jason Reynolds and Brendan Kiely**  
Reasons: Banned and challenged for profanity, drug use, and alcoholism, and because it was thought to promote anti-police views, contain divisive topics, and be “too much of a sensitive matter right now”
4. ***Speak* by Laurie Halse Anderson**  
Reasons: Banned, challenged, and restricted because it was thought to contain a political viewpoint and it was claimed to be biased against male students, and for the novel’s inclusion of rape and profanity
5. ***The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* by Sherman Alexie**  
Reasons: Banned and challenged for profanity, sexual references, and allegations of sexual misconduct by the author
6. ***Something Happened in Our Town: A Child’s Story About Racial Injustice* by Marianne Celano, Marietta Collins, and Ann Hazzard, illustrated by Jennifer Zivoin**

Reasons: Challenged for “divisive language” and because it was thought to promote anti-police views

7. ***To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee**

Reasons: Banned and challenged for racial slurs and their negative effect on students, featuring a “white savior” character, and its perception of the Black experience

8. ***Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck**

Reasons: Banned and challenged for racial slurs and racist stereotypes, and their negative effect on students

9. ***The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison**

Reasons: Banned and challenged because it was considered sexually explicit and depicts child sexual abuse

10. ***The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas**

Reasons: Challenged for profanity, and it was thought to promote an anti-police message

The office also hosted a live-streamed Q&A with the authors of *Something Happened in Our Town*, moderated by IFRT Chair-Elect Sam Helmick. The Q&A can be viewed on the [Banned Books Week YouTube channel](#).

### Banned Books Week 2021

OIF is pleased to join the Banned Books Week Coalition in [announcing](#) that Jason Reynolds has been named the inaugural Honorary Chair of Banned Books Week 2021. An advocate for storytelling and an outspoken critic of censorship, Reynolds is the author of more than a dozen books for young people, including the banned and challenged *All American Boys* and *Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You*.

ALA members and the wider literary community are invited to join OIF, the Banned Books Coalition, and Honorary Chair Jason Reynolds to celebrate the ways in which books unite us during Banned Books Week, September 26 – October 2, 2021.

This year’s theme is “Books Unite Us. Censorship Divides Us,” drawing attention to the power of books to reach across boundaries and build connections between readers. Reading—especially books that extend beyond our own experiences—expands our worldview. Censorship, on the other hand, divides us and creates barriers. The Intellectual Freedom Committee provided valuable feedback on the Banned Books Week theme, design, and tagline. Coordinating bookmarks, posters, and Field Reports are available on the ALA Store, and t-shirts and water bottles are available on the ALA Graphics Gift Shop. Free digital downloads and social media shareables can be found at [ala.org/bbooks](http://ala.org/bbooks).

### **IFC RESOLUTIONS, GUIDELINES, AND SUBGROUPS**

## “Resolution on U.S. Enterprises' Abridgement of Free Speech”

At ALA Virtual 2020 - Community Through Connection, ALA Council referred “Resolution Condemning U.S. Media Corporations' Abridgement of Free Speech” (ALA CD#46) to IFC and IRC “to form a working group that shall include members from both committees as well as the original mover and seconder of the resolution with a report due back at Midwinter 2021.” A subgroup was created and has met several times to review the resolution and craft language. At the 2021 Midwinter Meeting, ALA Council granted the subgroup a continuance of its charge to provide an updated report at the 2021 ALA Annual Conference.

“Resolution on U.S. Enterprises' Abridgement of Free Speech,” formerly titled “Resolution Condemning U.S. Media Corporations' Abridgement of Free Speech,” draws attention to high profile incidents of United States enterprises abridging the free speech rights of people and makes a distinction between a private platform’s deliberate suppression of an individual’s opinions and that platform’s decision to engage in content moderation to remove hate speech and incitement to violence from an online venue. The revised resolution refers to ALA documents such as “The Universal Right to Free Expression: An Interpretation of the *Library Bill of Rights*” and “Resolution on Access to Accurate Information,” as well as the United Nations’ “Universal Declaration of Human Rights” and “Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech.” Among the Resolved clauses, the resolution calls on ALA to strongly urge U.S. enterprises that allow for social interaction and comments on online platforms to resist efforts from governments to suppress or restrict the “right to freedom of opinion and expression” and urge those same U.S. enterprises to address disinformation, as well as targeted harassment or hate speech, in order to protect the honor, dignity, and humanity of users of their online platforms.

“Resolution on U.S. Enterprises' Abridgement of Free Speech” is included in this report as an action item. It was reviewed and approved by IRC and IFC to bring to ALA Council for consideration.

## IFC Programming Subgroup

The IFC is hosting three programs at the 2021 ALA Annual Conference. The live program “Freedom of the Press, Assembly, and Speech: First Amendment Issues Today” will take place Friday, June 25, from 1-2 p.m. CT. Led by IFC member Peter Coyl, with PEN America Chief Executive Officer Suzanne Nossel, OIF Director Deborah Caldwell-Stone, and Staff Attorney at the Knight First Amendment Institute Caroline DeCell as speakers, the program will review what libraries and library staff can do to support the protections granted by the First Amendment. The program is co-sponsored by the Freedom to Read Foundation and IFRT.

In the on-demand session “Social Justice Requires Broadband Access,” Freedom to Read Foundation trustee and former IFC member Eldon R. James will review the current problems in providing broadband access and the ways library workers can advocate for solutions with ALA

Public Policy and Advocacy Office Senior Policy Advocate Marijke Visser, District Librarian at North Slope Borough School District Erin Hollingsworth, and Assistant Professor at the University of West Georgia Angie Branyon. The program is co-sponsored by PLA, IFRT, CORE, the ALA Public Policy and Advocacy Office, AASL, and the Committee on Diversity.

“Can I Wear or Say That? Free Speech in the Workplace” will discuss the ability of library workers to express their political beliefs and personal identity on the job through their dress and speech. Moderated by IFC member Peter Coyl, the on-demand session gains insight from General Counsel of the Freedom to Read Foundation Theresa Chmara, Partner at the Weiner Law Group LLP Douglas S. Zucker, and COPE member and Director of Discovery and Delivery California Digital Library Sarah Houghton. The program is co-sponsored by PLA, CORE, the Freedom to Read Foundation, and IFRT.

### Continuing IFC Subgroups

At the 2021 ALA Midwinter Meeting, ALA Council approved “Resolution in Opposition to Facial Recognition Software in Libraries.” To educate library workers on facial recognition technologies, the IFC’s Facial Recognition Subgroup has outlined a Q&A based on questions received from the library community. The subgroup has currently paused its work and plans to continue after the 2021 ALA Annual Conference. Anyone interested in joining the subgroup can contact IFC Chair Martin Garnar.

The Social Justice and Intellectual Freedom Subgroup continues to develop messaging and a framework that proactively demonstrates the interdependence of intellectual freedom and social justice. It is also reviewing neutrality rhetoric and devising an alternative as charged by the “Resolution to Condemn White Supremacy and Fascism as Antithetical to Library Work,” passed by ALA Council at the 2021 Midwinter Meeting. The subgroup has representation from many groups across the association, including IFC, COPE, the National Associations of Librarians of Color, Committee on Diversity, Accessibility Assembly, Rainbow Round Table, and Social Responsibilities Round Table.

In response to inquiries sent to OIF about removing titles from collections based on authors’ actions rather than book content, the IFC formed a subgroup to create a Q&A that answers library workers’ questions about problematic authors and their works in library collections, displays, and programs. The proposed resources will discuss and develop a definition of a “problematic author,” outline possible solutions and actions library workers can take, and explore different situations that library workers may encounter.

## **ACTION ITEMS**

The Intellectual Freedom Committee moves the adoption of the following action item:

CD # 19.4 "Resolution on U.S. Enterprises' Abridgement of Free Speech"

In closing, the Intellectual Freedom Committee thanks the division and chapter intellectual freedom committees, the Intellectual Freedom Round Table, the unit liaisons, and the OIF staff. The IFC would like to thank outgoing IFC members Jim DelRosso, M. Teresa Doherty, Holly Eberle, Steven Greechie, and Lisa Mandina for their dedicated work and leadership.

Respectfully Submitted,

ALA Intellectual Freedom Committee

Martin L. Garnar, Chair

Glen J. Benedict

Peter D. Coyl

Jim DelRosso

M. Teresa Doherty

Holly Melissa Eberle

Steven Greechie

Lesliediana Jones

Sophia Sotilleo

Julia M. Warga

Lisa Mandina, Committee Associate



## Resolution on U.S. Enterprises' Abridgement of Free Speech

Whereas in recent years there have been multiple high profile incidents<sup>1</sup> of United States enterprises abridging the free speech rights of people of the United States, apparently to maintain profitable relationships with repressive governments;

Whereas "[The Universal Right to Free Expression: An Interpretation of the \*Library Bill of Rights\*](#)" states "the American Library Association opposes any use of governmental prerogative that leads to intimidation of individuals that prevents them from exercising their rights to hold opinions without interference, and to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas";

Whereas Article 12 of the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) states "No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks";

Whereas Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers";

Whereas there is a distinction between a private platform's deliberate suppression of an individual's opinions and that platform's decision to engage in content moderation to remove hate speech and incitement to violence from an online venue;

Whereas the [United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech](#) defines "hate speech" as "any kind of communication in speech, writing or behaviour, that attacks or uses pejorative or discriminatory language with reference to a person or a group on the basis of who they are, in other words, based on their religion, ethnicity, nationality, race, colour, descent, gender or other identity factor"; and

Whereas the American Library Association is on record as opposing the use of disinformation through its "[Resolution on Access to Accurate Information](#)"; now, therefore, be it:

*Resolved*, that the American Library Association (ALA), on behalf of its members:

1. reaffirms its commitment to free speech and free expression as previously stated in “The Universal Right to Free Expression: An Interpretation of the *Library Bill of Rights*”;
2. strongly urges U.S. enterprises that allow for social interaction and comments on online platforms to resist efforts from governments to suppress or restrict the “right to freedom of opinion and expression” as enshrined in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
3. urges those same U.S. enterprises to address disinformation, as well as targeted harassment or hate speech, in order to protect the honor, dignity, and humanity of users of their online platforms; and
4. recommends library workers and governing bodies share this resolution with library users and local media.

<sup>1</sup> Allen-Ebrahimian, B. (2020, June 11). Zoom closed account of U.S.-based Chinese activist “to comply with local law”. Axios.com. Retrieved from <https://www.axios.com/zoom-closes-chinese-user-account-tiananmen-square-f218fed1-69af-4bdd-aac4-7eaf67f34084.html>; Bottela, E. (2019 December 4). TikTok Admits It Suppressed Videos by Disabled, Queer, and Fat Creators. Slate.com. Retrieved from <https://slate.com/technology/2019/12/tiktok-disabled-users-videos-suppressed.html>; Ghaffary, Shirin. (2019 October 15). Google employees are fighting over their company’s decision to ban a Hong Kong protest video game app. Vox.com. Retrieved from <https://www.vox.com/2019/10/15/20915729/google-hong-kong-video-game-revolution-of-our-times>; Gurman, Michael. (2019 October 8). Apple Pulls Taiwanese Flag Emoji From iPhones in Hong Kong. Bloomberg.com. Retrieved from <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-10-08/apple-pulls-taiwanese-flag-emoji-from-iphones-in-hong-kong>; Nellis, S. (2019 October 9). Apple removes police-tracking app used in Hong Kong protests from its app store. Reuters.com. Retrieved from [https://www.reuters.com/article/hongkong-protests-apple/apple-removes-police-tracking-app-used-in-hong-kong-protests-from-its-app-store-idUSL2N26V00Z?utm\\_source=reddit.com](https://www.reuters.com/article/hongkong-protests-apple/apple-removes-police-tracking-app-used-in-hong-kong-protests-from-its-app-store-idUSL2N26V00Z?utm_source=reddit.com); Sopan, D. & Stein, M. (2019, October 6). N.B.A. Executive’s Hong Kong Tweet Starts Firestorm in China. NYTimes.com. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/06/sports/daryl-morey-rockets-china.html>; Vincent, J. (27 May 2020). YouTube fixes error that deleted comments critical of the Chinese Communist Party. TheVerge.com. Retrieved from <https://www.theverge.com/2020/5/27/21271611/youtube-deletes-comments-critical-china-communist-party-fixed>; Wagner, L. (2019 October 8). Internal Memo: ESPN Forbids Discussion Of Chinese Politics When Discussing Daryl Morey’s Tweet About Chinese Politics. Deadspin.com. Retrieved from [https://deadspin.com/internal-memo-ESPN-forbids-discussion-of-chinese-polit-1838881032?rev=1570564428660&utm\\_campaign=socialflow\\_deadspin\\_twitter&utm\\_medium=socialflow&utm\\_source=deadspin\\_twitter](https://deadspin.com/internal-memo-ESPN-forbids-discussion-of-chinese-polit-1838881032?rev=1570564428660&utm_campaign=socialflow_deadspin_twitter&utm_medium=socialflow&utm_source=deadspin_twitter); Zialcita, P. (2019, October 8). Blizzard Entertainment Bans Esports Player After Pro-Hong Kong Comments. NPR.org. Retrieved from <https://www.npr.org/2019/10/08/768245386/blizzard-entertainment-bans-esports-player-after-pro-hong-kong-comments>; Zialcita, P. (2019, October 11). Blizzard Reduces Penalties Following Public Backlash Over Esports Player Ban. NPR.org. Retrieved from <https://www.npr.org/2019/10/11/769362193/blizzard-entertainment-faces-public-backlash-following-esports-player-ban>

