Intellectual Freedom Updates
June 2021

Intellectual Freedom Awards Celebration

The ALA Intellectual Freedom Round Table (IFRT), the Freedom to Read Foundation (FTRF), and the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) iSchool invite library professionals and the public to a free virtual celebration for their intellectual freedom award winners on Thursday, June 24th, 2021, at 5:00 p.m. CT.

Julius C. Jefferson Jr., ALA President and former FTRF President, will open the celebration with a talk highlighting the value of intellectual freedom awards in the profession and in our culture.

Following the presentations, award-winning banned author Kyle Lukoff will present a celebratory keynote speech. Lukoff is a children's book author, school librarian, and former bookseller. He is best known for the Stonewall award-winning *When Aidan Became a Brother* and *Call Me Max*. *Call Me Max* gained attention when parents in Texas complained about the book being read in an elementary school classroom. A Utah school district also canceled its equity book program after the book was read to third graders.

The award recipients honored at the virtual celebration include:

- [Kelley Allen](#), the recipient of the 2020 FTRF Roll of Honor for her work in providing substantial financial support for the foundation.

- [Connecticut Library Association Intellectual Freedom Committee](#), 2020 recipient of the Gerald Hodges Intellectual Freedom Chapter Relations Award for identifying emerging issues with LinkedIn Learning and initiating a national conversation with the profession on the topic of privacy and the appropriate use of patron information.

- [Amy Dodson](#), 2020 recipient of the UIUC iSchool's Robert B. Downs Intellectual Freedom Award for supporting the value and necessity of equity, diversity, and inclusion as a part of her library's mission and service.
• **Martin Garnar**, 2021 recipient of the John Philip Immroth Memorial Award for his active leadership in the ALA intellectual freedom community.

• **Rebecca Ginsburg**, 2020 recipient of the John Philip Immroth Memorial Award for championing the fight to restore access to books in the Education Justice Project and raise awareness of prison censorship by creating the Freedom to Learn Campaign.

• **Robie Harris**, recipient of the 2021 FTRF Roll of Honor for her decades of writing comprehensive and accessible books for children and young people and championing their right to accurate and truthful information about health, sexuality, human reproduction, and strong emotions.

• **Missouri Library Association**, 2021 recipient of the Gerald Hodges Intellectual Freedom Chapter Relations Award for their effective response to Missouri House Bill No. 2044, known as the “Parental Oversight of Public Libraries Act”.

• **Henry (Hank) Reichman**, 2020 recipient of the Eli M. Oboler Memorial Award for best published work in the area of intellectual freedom, *The Future of Academic Freedom*.

Register online to join us in recognizing these award recipients and the organizations that strive to educate and raise awareness of intellectual freedom.

**ALA Annual Educational Programs**

Friday, June 25
• 10am CT: Challenges & Crises: Preparing Your Board of Trustees
• 1pm CT: Freedom of the Press, Assembly, and Speech: First Amendment Issues Today

Saturday, June 26
• 2:45pm CT: Problematic Titles and You: Inclusive Collections, Hot Topics, and Intellectual Freedom (IFRT Chair’s Program)

**On Demand**
• 2020 Censorship by the Numbers
• Can I Wear or Say That? Free Speech in the Workplace
• Privacy Field Guides: Take Action on Privacy in Your Library
• Social Justice Requires Broadband Access

**ALA Code of Ethics**

In collaboration with member groups supported by the Office for Diversity, Literacy and Outreach, the Committee on Professional Ethics created a subgroup in June 2020 that produced a new ninth principle of the *ALA Code of Ethics* for ALA Council consideration. They have sought
input from a broad array of groups including the ODLOS Advisory Committee, the Committee on Diversity, the Intellectual Freedom Committee, ALA Divisions and the entire membership of ALA. The principle was posted on ALA Connect to invite member feedback and was shared with ALA Council and Executive Board. On May 11, the members of the Committee on Professional Ethics unanimously approved the ninth principle to be proposed to ALA Council for adoption as an addition to the ALA 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.”

Banned Books Week

Jason Reynolds has been named the inaugural Honorary Chair for Banned Books Week 2021. Read the Entertainment Weekly exclusive.

Banned Books Week (September 26-October 2, 2021) is an annual event celebrating the freedom to read. This year's Banned Books Week theme is "Books Unite Us. Censorship Divides Us." Sharing stories important to us means sharing a part of ourselves. Books reach across boundaries and build connections between readers. Censorship, on the other hand, creates barriers.

Let everyone know about the freedom to read with these tees, tank tops, and water bottles from the ALA Graphics Gift Shop! Find posters, bookmarks, and more on the ALA Store. Purchases and donations support the Office for Intellectual Freedom's work in defending and promoting the freedom to read.

Books Under Fire, 2nd Edition

Pat R. Scales' updated “Books under Fire: A Hit List of Banned and Challenged Children's Books” from ALA Editions in cooperation with ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom (OIF) includes
resources for defending books, including book summaries, challenge descriptions, reviews & talking points about book themes.

Featuring a timely and diverse cross-section of frequently targeted titles, complete with many quotes and comments from authors whose works have been challenged, this book will be an important tool for library managers, children's and YA librarians, and teachers.

Reduced *Journal of Intellectual Freedom and Privacy* Subscriptions

The *Journal of Intellectual Freedom & Privacy (JIFP)* continues to update readers with peer-reviewed articles, book reviews, legal briefs, and opinion pieces, as well as serving as the publication of record detailing the latest incidents of censorship, court rulings, legal controversies, and success stories. Reports to Council from IFC, COPE, and FTRF are also included. The latest issue of the journal covered stories on social media and COVID-19 misinformation, as well as a history of censorship in the United States.

*Subscriptions are reduced 50%* for individual or institution members of the ALA Intellectual Freedom Round Table and the Freedom to Read Foundation.

**Intellectual Freedom Round Table Activities:**

To increase member engagement and recruitment, IFRT hosts three ongoing quarterly events:

- **IFRT Reads** is an educational and thought-provoking discussion group. Hosted in ALA Connect, this discussion group is a space where IFRT members can ask questions, pose alternative views, offer their experiences, and generally discuss written works that fall under the umbrella of intellectual freedom. Every quarter a new book, article, or chapter is chosen and posted in the group for asynchronous and live discussions with authors and experts.
- IFRT Virtual Salons are topic-based town hall events. The last salon centered on civic literacy in conjunction with the election and census.
- IFRT Happy Hours are evening events that are open to all and encourage debate, networking, and building relationships with like-minded colleagues.

The April *IFRT Newsletter* was published by the Publications and Communications Committee. This quarter highlighted the first ever All Member IFRT Gathering, a call for committee volunteers, spring election results and upcoming ALA Annual programs co-sponsored by IFRT. All the great initiatives and programs led by round table members.
Censorship and Recent Challenges

From January 1, 2021, to May 17, 2021, OIF has tracked 110 unique cases. OIF provided support and consultation on 83 cases.

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 Mariko 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.

**Intellectual Freedom Blog**

OIF will circulate a quarterly call for Intellectual Freedom Blog writers on August 1. We are looking for writers with an emphasis on highlighting diverse voices as well as perspectives on ALA’s core values and Code of Ethics.

**State Intellectual Freedom Network**

OIF connects with state library associations, ACRL and AASL chapters about intellectual freedom, privacy, book challenges, and reporting censorship. Our goal is to empower volunteer committees with resources and a network of people who engage their state membership in
intellectual freedom advocacy and awareness. The SIFnet Connect Community includes 64 representatives that last met on March 10 and will meet again on June 10.

Report Censorship Toolkit

The American Library Association's Office for Intellectual Freedom (OIF) encourages library workers and educators to amplify the "Report Censorship" message. Article III of the Library Bill of Rights states, “Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.” The information gathered from these reports helps OIF: Stay on top of trends; Supply library workers crucial tools, resources, workshops, and programs; and Compile the Top 10 Most Challenged Books list and trend reports for public awareness.