



# FIELD REPORT 2019

## BANNED & CHALLENGED BOOKS

ALA American Library Association  
OFFICE FOR INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM

# CENSORSHIP IS A DEAD END. FIND YOUR FREEDOM TO

# READ



**Censorship creates obstacles and barriers in our path toward the freedom to read—** whether it's a book hidden on the top shelf, a speaker cancellation, or profanity marked out on a page, censorship will always be around. But it's how we defeat these barriers to find the freedom to read that is crucial.

The journey toward the freedom to read is never straightforward. When confronted with a challenge or ban, some readers write letters, speak out at board meetings, circulate petitions, and initiate discussions with those who would want to censor. Some of these stories are shared in this Field Report. Each challenge and incident listed in this publication is sourced from public, verified reports from the year 2019, including news articles, meeting minutes, and entries from the *Journal of Intellectual Freedom and Privacy (JIFP)*.

Our office—which has been tracking reports of attempts to remove materials and services in libraries and schools since the 1990s—continues to see an increase in challenges to LGBTQIA+ materials and programming. Among the Top 10 Most Challenged Books of 2019 listed on the back of this publication, eight of them were challenged because of LGBTQIA+ content. Other examples of books challenged for LGBTQIA+ content in this report are *Hurricane Child* (page 6), *Fun Home* (page 4), and *Worm Loves Worm* (page 4). Challenges to Drag Queen Story Hours—programs that feature drag queens reading stories to children in libraries—have also been on the rise. We've also seen a resurgence of censorship attempts by organized pressure groups and conservative bloggers.

By staying updated about attempts to limit your First Amendment rights, you can break down barriers and overcome obstacles to access more information. One of the best places to celebrate your right to read? Your local library. You can find even more ways to combat censorship throughout this Field Report.

The journey toward your freedom to read takes on many forms.  
**What path will you take?**

*We thank speaker and author James LaRue, the former director of the Office for Intellectual Freedom, who compiled the entries for this year's Field Report.*



OFFICE FOR  
Intellectual Freedom  
American Library Association



# BOOKS BANNED OR CHALLENGED IN 2019

This Field Report is arranged alphabetically by the author's last name. It is not uncommon for challenges to affect more than one book. In these cases, the complete description and source for the challenge is listed under the first author alphabetically; the additional challenged books refer back to that author.

**ALEXIE, SHERMAN**

## THE ABSOLUTELY TRUE DIARY OF A PART-TIME INDIAN (2007)

When this young adult novel was used in an eighth-grade language arts class at the North Albany (OR) Middle School, a parent of a student in a different class (not the class reading the book) objected to the language and references to masturbation. The Reconsideration Committee voted to retain the book.

Source: 2019 Annual Report, State Library of Oregon

**ALLARD, HARRY**

## THE STUPIDS DIE (1985)

A grandparent filed a request for reconsideration at the Hermiston (OR) Public Library objecting to the derogatory last name in the children's humorous picture book. Retained.

Source: 2019 Annual Report, State Library of Oregon

**ANDERSON, AIRLIE**

## NEITHER (2018)

The superintendent of the school district in Oak Park, CA, announced the introduction of gender identity curriculum for elementary schools to parents, to include the books *Sparkle Boy* by Lesléa Newman, *It's Okay to Be Different* by Todd Parr, *Red: A Crayon's Story* by Michael Hall,

*Neither* by Airlie Anderson, and *Jamie is Jamie: A Book About Being Yourself and Playing Your Way* by Afsaneh Moradian.

The curriculum sparked strong protests from 300 parents, some claiming that the lessons were "unscientific ideology," others believing that the parents should decide whether to broach the subject, not the schools. Following a review by the district curriculum council and parent-teacher organizations at each of the three elementary schools, the Oak Park Board of Education adopted the program.

Source: "Boys, Girls and Genders In-Between: A Classroom Lesson for Modern Third-Graders," *Los Angeles Times*, Dec. 17, 2019.

**ARUNDHATI, ROY**

## THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS (1997)

An incoming first-year at the Gardendale (AL) High School chose this *New York Times* bestseller from a school-recommended "Advanced World Literature" summer reading list. Set in India of 1969, the book won the Man Booker Prize. The student complained to her father about its "inappropriate content." The father reviewed it, and claimed the book contained graphic sexual content that he absolutely "didn't want his children knowing about."

A school review committee recommended its withdrawal from all schools. The principal, who had immediately removed the list from the school website, will now review all reading lists.

Source: "Gardendale Parent Upset Over Book Included on Summer Reading List," *WVTM13*, Aug. 16, 2019.

**ASHER, JAY**

## THIRTEEN REASONS WHY (2007)

Parents of the Westwood (NJ) Regional Schools argued that *Thirteen Reasons Why* by Jay Asher, and *Can't Get There From Here* and *Boot Camp* by Todd Strasser, had the potential to do "irrevocable harm and should be pulled from the school." Following an author visit from Strasser, all three books were added to the Westwood Regional Middle School language arts classroom library by the principal. After committee evaluation, she replied to parents' complaints: the two Strasser books would remain in the classroom collections and Asher's book would be relocated to the school library. The school board voted to retain the titles. A local police chief, in favor of removing the books, announced that he was running for a seat on the board.

Source: "Westwood Regional School Board Set to Answer Parents on Challenged Books," *Pascack Press and Northern Valley Press*, July 22, 2019.

ATWOOD, MARGARET

### THE HANDMAID'S TALE (1985)

This classic novel was included on a reading list before the beginning of a twelfth-grade advanced placement literature and composition class at a north Atlanta suburb's high school in Georgia. A student's mother forbade him from choosing the book. Alleging "porn and gore and cursing," the mother wanted the book removed from the high school and held prayer circles outside the library while a committee of more than a dozen staff, administrators, and parents discussed the item. Retained.

Source: "Fighting Under His Eye: One High School Teacher's Tale of Defending Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*," *Writer's Digest*, Sept. 27, 2019.

This dystopian novel was offered as a curriculum choice to students for an elective high school English class in Marietta, OH. Two complaints were filed alleging vulgarity and sexual overtones, although school officials believed the cited passages did not reflect the context of the novel. The school board voted to retain the book in the curriculum.

Source: "Complaints Ask for Removal of 'The Handmaid's Tale' from School Curriculum," WTAP, Aug. 29, 2019.

AUSTRIAN, J.J.

### WORM LOVES WORM (2016)

A patron wrote to the newspaper stating that unlabeled LGBTQ books could be found in the children's area of the Independence (KS) Public Library and they should be labeled and removed from that section, including *And Tango Makes Three* by Peter Parnell and Justin Richardson, *Heather Has Two Mommies* by Lesléa Newman, *Gay and Lesbian History for Kids* by Jerome Pohlen, *My Princess Boy* by

Cheryl Kilodavis, *George* by Alex Gino, *Stella Brings the Family* by Miriam Schiffer, *Worm Loves Worm* by J. J. Austrian, *It's Okay to Be Different* by Todd Parr, and *Families* by Shelley Rotner and Sheila M. Kelly. The patron stated, "There needs to be some kind of censorship on the books available to the children. This is just a common sense request." She was invited to attend a library board meeting. Her letter asked others to join her. All nine books have been retained.

Source: Letter to the Editor, *Daily Reporter*, May 4, 2019.

BAILEY, JACQUI

### SEX, PUBERTY AND ALL THAT STUFF: A GUIDE TO GROWING UP (2004)

A parent complained that the book was "sexually graphic . . . explicit . . . very suggestive and encouraged sexual experimentation." In accordance with library policy, the director of the Mt. Angel (OR) Public Library met with the patron and addressed the challenge. The book was retained in the junior nonfiction section. The patron chose not to appeal the decision to the library board.

Source: 2019 Annual Report, State Library of Oregon

BARKER, PAT

### REGENERATION (1991)

A committee submitted a list of supplemental novels recommended for reading in English courses in Columbia County, GA, high schools and were specifically asked in an email the day before school began to provide a list of page numbers of any sex or rape scenes, graphic depictions, or profanity other than "hell" or "damn." The superintendent said that she was unwilling to approve *Regeneration*, Mark Haddon's

*The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, and Nic Stone's *Dear Martin* because of the "explicit" and "unacceptable" content. A procedure was adopted that notifies parents about the use of controversial titles in the classroom and allows the parents to request redacted copies. The superintendent stated that the district does not have a process to decide what books are allowed in the media centers but will begin looking at a review procedure.

Source: "Columbia County Schools Limit Novel Choices for High School Students," *The Augusta Chronicle*, Oct. 8, 2019.

BECHDEL, ALISON

### FUN HOME: A FAMILY TRAGICOMIC (2006)

Administrators from two New Jersey high schools in the North Hunterdon-Voorhees School District reviewed a single page of this graphic novel that has a lesbian protagonist. Finding the images on a single page of the 233-page book objectionable and in "violation of district policies," administration restricted the book's circulation to students with explicit parental permission. Earlier in the year, a new state law had been passed requiring boards of education to include instruction, and adopt instructional materials, that accurately portray political, economic, and social contributions of LGBTQIA+ people. Following a letter from ALA-OIF, the books were restored to open circulation.

Source: "New Jersey High Schools Restrict Access to *Fun Home*," NCAC.org.

BOND, VICTORIA, AND T. R. SIMON

### ZORA AND ME (2010)

Parents and teachers disagreed over the presence of LGBTQIA+ books that were purchased for a "diverse classroom libraries"

initiative in the Loudoun County, VA, elementary and high schools. Twenty-seven books were formally challenged including *Heather Has Two Mommies* by Lesléa Newman, *My Princess Boy* by Cheryl Kilodavis, *Prince & Knight* by Daniel Haack, *So Hard To Say* by Alex Sanchez, *Alvin Ho: Allergic to Girls, School, and Other Scary Things* by Lenore Look, *Big Bob, Little Bob* by James Howe, *Dragons in a Bag* by Zetta Elliott, *Flowers from Mariko* by Rick Noguchi and Deneen Jenks, *Gabi, a Girl in Pieces* by Isabel Quintero, *Girls Like Me* by Nina Packebush, *Goldie Vance* by Hope Larson, *Hurricane Child* by Kacen Callender, *Mommy's Khimar* by Jamilah Thompkins-Bigelow, *My Year in the Middle* by Lila Quintero Weaver, *Other Broken Things* by C. Desir, *Rani Patel In Full Effect* by Sonia Patel, *The Season of You & Me* by Robin Constantine, *Silent Music: A Story of Baghdad* by James Rumford, *The Pants Project* by Cat Clarke, *The Witch Boy* by Molly Ostertag, *The Truth as Told by Mason Buttle* by Leslie Connor, *Want to Play Trucks?* by Ann Stott, *We March* by Shane W. Evans, *Weird Girl and What's His Name* by Meagan Brothers, *Willow and the Wedding* by Denise Brennan-Nelson, *Zora and Me* by Victoria Bond and T. R. Simon, and *Ask My Mood Ring How I Feel* by Diana Lopez. Four titles were relocated to the middle school and three titles were relocated to higher grade levels within the school.

Source: "LGBTQ School Book Controversy in Loudoun County," FOX 5 DC, Nov. 12, 2019.

#### BRENNAN-NELSON, DENISE

### WILLOW AND THE WEDDING (2017)

Complete description and source for the Loudoun County, VA, challenge listed under "Bond, Victoria" on page 4.

#### BROTHERS, MEAGAN

### WEIRD GIRL AND WHAT'S HIS NAME (2015)

Complete description and source for the Loudoun County, VA, challenge listed under "Bond, Victoria" on page 4.

**Stay updated on censorship attempts by following the Office for Intellectual Freedom on Twitter and Facebook and subscribing to Intellectual Freedom News.**

#### BRUNDAGE JR., VERNON

### SHOOT YOUR SHOT: A SPORT-INSPIRED GUIDE TO LIVING YOUR BEST LIFE (2018)

The interim superintendent of a Providence, RI, school district directed the purchase of 16,510 copies of the basketball-related motivational book as mandatory reading for all middle and high school students. Following concerns by district teachers that the books were overtly religious, the superintendent withdrew the requirement. The books remain, but reading them is voluntary.

Source: "Providence Schools Chief Drops Required-Reading Book," *Providence Journal*, Sept. 12, 2019.

#### BURGESS, ANTHONY

### A CLOCKWORK ORANGE (1962)

It's Your Tea Party and Florida Citizens' Alliance challenged 14 books, alleging that the books were "obscene and/or pornographic material" under Florida law. The school libraries only carried 10 of the 14 books

including *Almost Perfect* by Brian Katcher, *Angela's Ashes* by Frank McCourt, *The Women of Brewster's Place* by Gloria Naylor, *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison, *The Truth about Alice* by Jennifer Mathieu, *Dreaming In Cuban* by Cristina García, *Killing Mr. Griffin* by Lois Duncan, *The Awakening* by Kate Chopin, *A Clockwork Orange* by Anthony Burgess, and *Beloved* by Toni Morrison. The superintendent of the Marion County (FL) Public Schools removed all the available books from middle schools. As required by their policies, she convened a committee to review the remaining nine books to determine the educational value of the content for high school students. The committee recommended their retention, and the superintendent approved the recommendation. The groups then appealed the retention of three of those titles to the school board, which voted to keep them.

Source: "Group Asks School District to Remove 14 Books from Libraries," *Ocala Star-Banner*, Feb. 27, 2019.

#### BUTLER, PAUL

### CHOKEHOLD: POLICING BLACK MEN (2017)

The Arizona Department of Corrections (ADC) informed the publisher of the book, which was authored by a former prosecutor, that the book would no longer be allowed in Arizona prisons. Following a 2019 decision by the Arizona Supreme Court that found the ADC had unconstitutionally violated prisoner rights through the previous censorship of books on sexual themes, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) challenged the censorship of *Chokehold*. While the book calls for significant change in the criminal justice system, it does not threaten "to disrupt the facility's ability to maintain

security and order,” stated the ACLU. The ADC said it will review the ACLU request.

Source: “ACLU Accuses Arizona Department Of Corrections Of Violating Inmates’ Rights Over Banned Book,” KJZZ, May 16, 2019.

**CALENDER, KACEN**

### **HURRICANE CHILD** (2018)

Complete description and source for the Loudoun County, VA, challenge listed under “Bond, Victoria” on page 4.

**CARRÈRE, EMMANUEL**

### **THE KINGDOM** (2017)

Citing parental, donor, and alumni concerns about “scandalous” materials, the Franciscan University of Steubenville (OH) demoted the English department chair who recommended the book for an advanced English class. The university at first defended the book, which speculated that the Virgin Mary might have had sex and masturbated. Later, the president apologized for the book, which he described as pornographic and blasphemous, and called on professors to take an Oath of Fidelity, pledging support for the Catholic Magisterium. The book is no longer available at the campus bookstore.

Source: “Banning a Book, in the Name of ‘True Academic Freedom,’” *Inside Higher Ed*, Jan. 15, 2019.

**CHOPIN, KATE**

### **THE AWAKENING** (1899)

Complete description and source for the Marion County, FL, challenge listed under “Burgess, Anthony” on page 5.

**CLARKE, CAT**

### **THE PANTS PROJECT** (2017)

Complete description and source for the Loudoun County, VA, challenge listed under “Bond, Victoria” on page 4.

**CONNOR, LESLIE**

### **THE TRUTH AS TOLD BY MASON BUTTLE** (2018)

Complete description and source for the Loudoun County, VA, challenge listed under “Bond, Victoria” on page 4.

**CONSTANTINE, ROBIN**

### **THE SEASON OF YOU & ME** (2016)

Complete description and source for the Loudoun County, VA, challenge listed under “Bond, Victoria” on page 4.

**COOPER, STEVEN**

### **OFFICIAL OVERSTREET INDIAN ARROWHEAD IDENTIFICATION AND PRICE GUIDE** (2018)

A Harney County, OR, patron with an archeological background registered a complaint that the library’s copy of this encyclopedic guide was an affront to Native Americans and could encourage people to loot native sites. Retained.

Source: 2019 Annual Report, State Library of Oregon

**CORINNA, HEATHER**

### **S.E.X.: THE ALL-YOU-NEED-TO-KNOW SEXUALITY GUIDE TO GET YOU THROUGH YOUR TEENS AND TWENTIES** (2016)

The California Board of Education voted to adopt a Health Education Framework and sex education curriculum using LGBTQIA+ inclusive language and that provided information about HIV prevention, safe sex, human trafficking, and gender identity. While praised by some parents, the suggested curriculum was protested by other parents and conservative groups. Teachers were not required to teach any specific part of the curriculum and many schools allowed parents to opt out their

## **Contact the Office for Intellectual Freedom**

**when there’s a challenge or ban at your library, school, or university. You don’t have to be a librarian or ALA member to get one-on-one help. Find more ways to reach us at [ala.org/oif](http://ala.org/oif).**

children. Some parents also objected to *S.E.X.: The All-You-Need-to-Know Sexuality Guide to Get You Through Your Teens and Twenties*, which they described as “explicit and graphic.” No removals of the book have been reported.

Source: “California Parents Protest New Controversial Sex Education Guidance,” KTLA, May 17, 2019.

A Mt. Angel (OR) Public Library patron submitted a request for reconsideration, concluding that the book was “a total X-rated sex manual which degrades sexuality into something very base and crude” and “encouraged young teens to experiment and practice.” Retained.

Source: 2019 Annual Report, State Library of Oregon

**DE BRUNHOFF, JEAN**

### **TRAVELS OF BABAR** (1932)

A patron objected to the “racist depictions of Africans” with “stereotypical features” in this children’s book. Retained.

Source: 2019 Annual Report, State Library of Oregon

**DESIR, C.**

### **OTHER BROKEN THINGS** (2017)

Complete description and source for the Loudoun County, VA, challenge listed under “Bond, Victoria” on page 4.

DUNCAN, LOIS

**KILLING MR. GRIFFIN** (1978)

Complete description and source for the Marion County, FL, challenge listed under “Burgess, Anthony” on page 5.

ELLIOTT, ZETTA

**DRAGONS IN A BAG** (2018)

Complete description and source for the Loudoun County, VA, challenge listed under “Bond, Victoria” on page 4.

EVANS, SHANE W.

**WE MARCH** (2016)

Complete description and source for the Loudoun County, VA, challenge listed under “Bond, Victoria” on page 4.

FRANK, ANNE

**THE DIARY OF A YOUNG GIRL**

(1947)

A patron of the Josephine County Library District (Grants Pass, OR) complained about “talk about the vagina, penis, and sex” in Anne Frank’s *The Diary of a Young Girl*, and requested that an edited version replace it. After consideration by a committee of the various merits of different editions, the original material was retained in the children’s

section as well as the adult and young adult sections of the library.

Source: “Book Challenges Put Small Library in a Bind,” *Portland Tribune*, Sept. 24, 2019.

GARCÍA, CRISTINA

**DREAMING IN CUBAN** (1992)

Complete description and source for the Marion County, FL, challenge listed under “Burgess, Anthony” on page 5.

GINO, ALEX

**GEORGE** (2015)

The Scappoose (OR) School Board proposed a resolution to take *George* off the 16-book list for elementary students, a decision that would exclude its students from competing in regional or state voluntary Oregon Battle of the Books contests. No student was required to read the book. Following a contentious board meeting, the board defeated the resolution to remove the book from the list on a 5–2 vote.

Source: “Parents Debate Whether Book about Transgender Child Should be on School Reading List,” *KGW*, Jan. 15, 2019.

Complete description and source for the Independence, KS, challenge listed under “Austrian, J. J.” on page 3.

GINSBERG, ALLEN

**HOWL** (1956)

At least two parents of high school students in Steamboat Springs, CO, objected to the poem “Howl,” originally (and unsuccessfully) prosecuted as obscene in 1957. In 2019, a school reconsideration committee voted 8–1 to retain the classic work. A student claimed that she was not allowed to opt out of the assignment and hired legal counsel to press her claims. The teacher sent an apology to students,

claiming an oversight in not allowing students to opt out.

Source: “Steamboat Family Recruits Help of Religious Rights Attorney Over ‘Howl’ Controversy,” *Craig Press*, Nov. 20, 2019.

GREEN, LACI

**SEX PLUS: LEARNING, LOVING, AND ENJOYING YOUR BODY** (2018)

Challenged for “how to anal sex, oral sex, sex toy use, BDSM,” the book was moved from the young adult section to the adult section of the Mt. Angel (OR) Public Library.

Source: 2019 Annual Report, State Library of Oregon

HAACK, DANIEL

**PRINCE & KNIGHT** (2018)

A staff member of the ImagineIF Libraries (Kallispell, MT) read this gay-positive children’s book to a visiting daycare class of four- and five-year-olds. The teacher protested the topic’s presentation to a group of “innocent school children,” and in a letter to the newspaper said that the book should not only never be read to children again, but it should also be removed from the library altogether. Hundreds of complaints about the book were sent to the library, including comments from an angry county commissioner. During a public meeting, the board received many comments. Most were favorable to the library and the book. The board voted to retain the book but adopted a new program policy.

Source: “Library Board Votes to Keep Gay-Friendly Book on Shelf,” *Daily Inter Lake*, May 2, 2019.

After a complaint from a local pastor claiming the book “is a deliberate attempt to indoctrinate young children, especially boys, into the LGBTQA lifestyle,” this children’s book about two male characters who fall in love after fighting a dragon was withdrawn by the director of the Upshur

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**“While it may not be right for every family of Upshur County, it unquestionably serves the information needs of many of the families and young people residing in Upshur County.”**

—letter sent to Upshur County Public Library Board by the ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom, West Virginia Library Association, and National Coalition Against Censorship

County (WV) Public Library. The library board president refused to discuss the issue or hear public comments but did state that the book is retained in the children’s section.

Source: “Residents Not Happy after LGBTQ Children’s Book Decision Postponed,” WDTV, Nov. 21, 2019.

Complete description and source for the Loudoun County, VA, challenge listed under “Bond, Victoria” on page 4.

**HADDON, MARK**

### **THE CURIOUS INCIDENT OF THE DOG IN THE NIGHT-TIME** (2003)

After the book was included on the voluntary summer reading list of the Westmont (PA) Hilltop School District, there were complaints to the school board about “foul language,” “profane use of God’s name,” and a “negative portrayal of a character with autism or a similar disorder.” A curriculum committee recommended that the title not be included on the list. At the largest public turnout at a board meeting in recent memory (75 people), some people said there was a contradiction between the school’s ban on profanity and approval of the book that contains curse words. The board voted to retain the title. In the words of one board member, “I think that the value gained from understanding differences for this individual

in particular far outweighs the language used.”

Source: “Westmont Hilltop School Board Blocks Effort to Ban Book,” *The Tribune-Democrat*, May 17, 2019.

Complete description and source for the Columbia County, Georgia, challenge listed under “Barker, Pat” on page 4.

**HALL, MICHAEL**

### **RED: A CRAYON’S STORY** (2015)

Complete description and source for the Oak Park, CA, challenge listed under “Anderson, Airlie” on page 3.

**HARRIS, ROBIE H.**

### **IT’S PERFECTLY NORMAL** (1994)

*It’s Perfectly Normal* has been hailed by parents, educators, psychologists, and doctors for its thorough and scientifically valid information concerning puberty and sexual topics. Arizona Republican State Rep. Kelly Townsend wrote a Facebook post calling on public school and county libraries to pull copies from their shelves based on the false claim that the book “depicted minors having sexual intercourse.” The Maricopa County (AZ) Library District retained the book, finding that it adhered to their collection development policy.

Source: “How a Children’s Book Became a Sex Ed Strawman for Arizona Republicans,” *Phoenix New Times*, Dec. 17, 2019.

**HOFFMAN, SARAH, AND IAN HOFFMAN**

### **JACOB’S ROOM TO CHOOSE** (2019)

A patron challenged this children’s book that addresses gender expression and the use of elementary school bathrooms. The book was retained, and the board and director of the Warsaw (IN) Community Public Library had a public discussion about the reconsideration process.

Source: “Warsaw Library Works through Complaint About Book,” *Times Union Online*, Nov. 18, 2019.

**HOSSEINI, KHALED**

### **THE KITE RUNNER** (2003)

A parent of a ninth grader at the Park City (UT) School District expressed two concerns: first, that *The Kite Runner’s* child rape scene could cause students who have been sexually abused further trauma, and second, that there were other school-approved novels whose sexual content violated criminal code. The school board said it would take all comments under consideration.

Source: “Parents Say PCSD Books Are Pornographic And Should Be Eliminated From Reading Lists,” KPCW, Nov. 20, 2019.

**HOWE, JAMES**

### **BIG BOB, LITTLE BOB** (2016)

Complete description and source for the Loudoun County, VA, challenge listed under “Bond, Victoria” on page 4.

**HUBBARD, L. RON**

### **ALL TITLES BY AUTHOR**

A patron submitted a statement of concern about the library’s collection of Scientology materials written by L. Ron Hubbard, stating “more books give the cult the appearance of legitimacy.” The materials were retained, and the library notified the patron.

Source: 2019 Annual Report, State Library of Oregon



**KATCHER, BRIAN**

**ALMOST PERFECT** (2009)

Complete description and source for the Marion County, FL, challenge listed under “Burgess, Anthony” on page 5.

**KILODAVIS, CHERYL**

**MY PRINCESS BOY** (2009)

Complete description and source for the Loudoun County, VA, challenge listed under “Bond, Victoria” on page 4.

Complete description and source for the Independence, KS, challenge listed under “Austrian, J. J.” on page 4.

**KIRKMAN, ROBERT**

**THE WALKING DEAD** (2003-2019)

A teacher at the Wallace (ID) Sr. High School objected to this series of graphic novels available at the school library. A reconsideration committee—comprising students, staff, and parents—voted 7-4 to retain the books. However, after parental pushback, the district superintendent removed all the books.

Source: “WHS Examining Library Books Content Policy,” *Shoshone News-Press*, June 22, 2019.

**LARSON, HOPE**

**GOLDIE VANCE** (2016-2020)

Complete description and source for the Loudoun County, VA, challenge listed under “Bond, Victoria” on page 4.

**LAWSON, ROBERT**

**THEY WERE STRONG AND GOOD** (1940)

Winner of the 1941 Caldecott Medal, this nonfiction children’s book tells stories about the author’s family. A patron of the Tigard (OR) Public Library complained about two concerns: slavery was mentioned without

being condemned, and there were stereotypical representations of American Indians. In accordance with library policy, three library staff reviewed the item; the book was retained.

Source: 2019 Annual Report, State Library of Oregon

**LEE, HARPER**

**TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD** (1960)

A white substitute teacher at the Mustang (OK) High School read the N-word aloud from *To Kill A Mockingbird*. The only black student in the class recorded the reading, notified the teacher that she was offended, and brought the matter to the attention of her principal. The district adopted a new policy stating that “racially charged language will no longer be spoken” in classrooms. The status of the substitute teacher is not known.

Source: “Racial Slur in ‘To Kill a Mockingbird’ Leads to New Mustang School District Policy,” *KOCO News*, Nov. 22, 2019.

**LOOK, LENORE**

**ALVIN HO: ALLERGIC TO GIRLS, SCHOOL, AND OTHER SCARY THINGS** (2009)

Complete description and source for the Loudoun County, VA, challenge listed under “Bond, Victoria” on page 4.

**LOPEZ, DIANA**

**ASK MY MOOD RING HOW I FEEL** (2014)

Complete description and source for the Loudoun County, VA, challenge listed under “Bond, Victoria” on page 4.

**MARTINEZ, ANDRES VERA**

**LITTLE WHITE DUCK: A CHILDHOOD IN CHINA** (2012)

A parent challenged this favorably reviewed children’s book about life during the

Cultural Revolution in China because of its depiction of violence against animals. The Corvallis–Benton County (OR) Public Library reclassified the book from juvenile fiction graphic novels to juvenile nonfiction graphic novels because it was more memoir than fiction.

Source: 2019 Annual Report, State Library of Oregon

**MATHIEU, JENNIFER**

**THE TRUTH ABOUT ALICE** (2015)

Complete description and source for the Marion County, FL, challenge listed under “Burgess, Anthony” on page 5.

**MATSUI, YUSEI**

**ASSASSINATION CLASSROOM (SERIES)** (2012-2016)

This Japanese science fiction manga series featuring an octopus-like teacher who must be killed to prevent the destruction of the earth was available in the library of the Markham Intermediate School in New York. A parent of a student protested the violent premise of the series and met with school administrators. They decided to remove the book. The state Department of Education said that the series is not intended for middle school students, and it is not available in other middle schools in the state.

Source: “School Library Books Focusing on Classroom Violence Pulled from Shelves,” *SLive.com*, Jan. 31, 2019.

**Join organizations that defend and promote free access to information. A list can be found at [bannedbooksweek.org](http://bannedbooksweek.org).**

**McCourt, Frank**

**ANGELA'S ASHES** (1996)

Complete description and source for the Marion County, FL, challenge listed under “Burgess, Anthony” on page 5.

**Moradian, Afsaneh**

**JAMIE IS JAMIE:  
A BOOK ABOUT BEING YOURSELF  
AND PLAYING YOUR WAY** (2018)

Complete description and source for the Oak Park, CA, challenge listed under “Anderson, Airlie” on page 3.

**Morrison, Toni**

**THE BLUEST EYE** (1970)

Complete description and source for the Marion County, FL, challenge listed under “Burgess, Anthony” on page 5.

**Murakami, Haruki**

**KAFKA ON THE SHORE** (2002)

This international award-winning novel was on the approved reading list for the International Baccalaureate program. After discovering that her teenage son was reading the book, New Gloucester State Rep. Amy Arata concluded that the book’s content was too violent and sexual for students. She introduced a bill that would allow prosecutors to charge school administrators and teachers with a felony for sharing similar books with students. Penalties included potential fines and jail time. The bill was unanimously rejected by a legislative committee.

Source: “Maine Lawmaker Seeking to Ban ‘Obscene’ Books from Schools,” WGME, Jan. 16, 2019.

**Naylor, Gloria**

**THE WOMEN OF  
BREWSTER'S PLACE** (1982)

Complete description and source for the Marion County, FL,

challenge listed under “Burgess, Anthony” on page 5.

**Newman, Lesléa**

**HEATHER HAS TWO MOMMIES**

(1989)

Complete description and source for the Loudoun County, VA, challenge listed under “Bond, Victoria” on page 4.

Complete description and source for the Independence, KS, challenge listed under “Austrian, J. J.” on page 3.

**Suggest an enlightening banned or challenged book as your next book club read.**

**Newman, Lesléa**

**SPARKLE BOY** (2017)

Complete description and source for the Oak Park, CA, challenge listed under “Anderson, Airlie” on page 3.

**Noguchi, Rick, and Deneen Jenks**

**FLOWERS FROM MARIKO** (2001)

Complete description and source for the Loudoun County, VA, challenge listed under “Bond, Victoria” on page 4.

**Obradovic, Julie**

**AN UNFORTUNATE COINCIDENCE:  
A MOTHER'S LIFE INSIDE THE  
AUTISM CONTROVERSY** (2016)

A patron of the Corvallis-Benton County (OR) Public Library complained that the book spread misinformation about autism, and should not be in the

collection or shelved with other “legitimate items of medical value.” Retained.

Source: 2019 Annual Report, State Library of Oregon

**Ostertag, Molly**

**THE WITCH BOY** (2017)

Complete description and source for the Loudoun County, VA, challenge listed under “Bond, Victoria” on page 4.

**Packebush, Nina**

**GIRLS LIKE ME** (2017)

Complete description and source for the Loudoun County, VA, challenge listed under “Bond, Victoria” on page 4.

**Parr, Todd**

**IT'S OKAY TO BE DIFFERENT**

(2001)

Complete description and source for the Oak Park, CA, challenge listed under “Anderson, Airlie” on page 3.

Complete description and source for the Independence, KS, challenge listed under “Austrian, J. J.” on page 3.

**Patel, Sonia**

**RANI PATEL IN FULL EFFECT**

(2016)

Complete description and source for the Loudoun County, VA, challenge listed under “Bond, Victoria” on page 4.

**Pessin-Whedbee, Brook**

**WHO ARE YOU? THE KID'S GUIDE  
TO GENDER IDENTITY** (2016)

A Mt. Angel (OR) Public Library patron complained that the book “tells children that adults are wrong about gender—too much information for young ones.” Retained.

Source: 2019 Annual Report, State Library of Oregon

POHLEN, JEROME

**GAY AND LESBIAN HISTORY FOR KIDS: THE CENTURY-LONG STRUGGLE FOR LGBT RIGHTS, WITH 21 ACTIVITIES** (2015)

Complete description and source for the Independence, KS, challenge listed under “Austrian, J. J.” on page 3.

QUINTERO, ISABEL

**GABI, A GIRL IN PIECES** (2014)

Complete description and source for the Loudoun County, VA, challenge listed under “Bond, Victoria” on page 4.

RANSOM, HEATHER

**GOING GREEN** (2017)

A teacher in the Grants Pass (OR) School District’s middle school wrote a science fiction novel. It was approved for use in instruction by a parent committee. Then another parent objected that the book had “overly sensual materials for a 12 year old, talking about hooking up” and stated, “Normalizing this type of behavior, especially since a teacher . . . wrote it, kids may think this isn’t bad behavior.” Under consideration at this writing.

Source: 2019 Annual Report, State Library of Oregon

RICHARDSON, JUSTIN, AND PETER PARNELL

**AND TANGO MAKES THREE** (2005)

Complete description and source for the Independence, KS, challenge listed under “Austrian, J. J.” on page 3.

ROTNER, SHELLEY, AND SHEILA M. KELLY

**FAMILIES** (2015)

Complete description and source for the Independence, KS, challenge listed under “Austrian, J. J.” on page 3.

ROWLING, J. K.

**HARRY POTTER SERIES**

(1997–2007)

A pastor at St. Edward Catholic School in Nashville, TN, expressed concern about the heretical lessons students could learn from the series. He consulted exorcists, and removed the books from the school’s library. “These books present magic as both good and evil, which is not true, but in fact a clever deception,” he explained. “The curses and spells used in the books are actual curses and spells; which when read by a human being risk conjuring evil spirits into the presence of the person reading the text.” He also stated, “The Harry Potter books promote a Machiavellian approach to achieving the ends they desire with whatever means are necessary.” Removed.

Source: “Harry Potter Books Removed from St. Edward Catholic School due to ‘Curses and Spells,’” *Tennessean*, Aug. 31, 2019.

RUMFORD, JAMES

**SILENT MUSIC:**

**A STORY OF BAGHDAD** (2008)

Complete description and source for the Loudoun County, VA, challenge listed under “Bond, Victoria” on page 4.

RUSSELL, P. CRAIG

**THE GIVER** (2019)

The graphic novel version of the Lois Lowry book was blocked in the processing department by staff at the Macdonald (MI) Public Library, then wound up on the director’s desk. The staff member found the graphic novel scene of infant euthanasia inappropriate for the intended young adult audience. According to board minutes, the item was eventually reclassified from young adult to adult.

Source: MacDonald Public Library Board documents, Feb. 27, 2019.

SALBI, ZAINAB

**FREEDOM IS AN INSIDE JOB: OWNING OUR DARKNESS AND OUR LIGHT TO HEAL OURSELVES AND THE WORLD**

(2018)

Salbi’s memoir ranges from her childhood in Iraq to an arranged marriage in America to founding an organization to help women all over the world. One sexual scene in the book prompted a patron of the Deschutes (OR) Public Library district to request a label calling out adult content. Retained, not labeled.

Source: 2019 Annual Report, State Library of Oregon

SANCHEZ, ALEX

**SO HARD TO SAY** (2006)

Complete description and source for the Loudoun County, VA, challenge listed under “Bond, Victoria” on page 4.

**ALA’s Office for Intellectual Freedom receives reports on attempts to ban books in communities across the country. Find lists of frequently challenged books at [ala.org/bbooks/frequentlychallengedbooks](http://ala.org/bbooks/frequentlychallengedbooks)**

SANDERS, ROB

### PRIDE: THE STORY OF HARVEY MILK AND THE RAINBOW FLAG

(2018)

A parent of a Hanover County (VA) Public Schools student was upset that a teacher read this children's book to their seven-year-old daughter's class, which she claimed encouraged her daughter to question her faith. Originally, the teacher stood by the civil rights lesson. But after the local TV station reached out to district officials, the principal sent a letter home to parents apologizing for the incident, and stating that the book had not been approved for the curriculum.

Source: "Hanover Mom Outraged after Gay Rights Book Read to 7-Year-Old Daughter," WRIC, April 1, 2019.

SAVAGE, DAN, AND TERRY MILLER

### IT GETS BETTER: COMING OUT, OVERCOMING BULLYING, AND CREATING A LIFE WORTH LIVING

(2011)

A patron of the Mt. Angel (OR) Public Library complained about the "anti-religious" sentiments and "frequent use of profanity" in this book by the founder of the "It Gets Better" YouTube channel, which provides support to LGBTQIA+ teens in the wake of many teen suicides. After following appropriate policy, the director informed the patron that the book would be retained. The patron did not appeal the decision.

Source: 2019 Annual Report, State Library of Oregon

SCHIFFER, MIRIAM B.

### STELLA BRINGS THE FAMILY

(2015)

Complete description and source for the Independence, KS, challenge listed under "Austrian, J. J." on page 3.

Want to let a banned author know you have their back? Send them a hand-written letter. Find postcards and addresses at [ala.org/bbooks/dear-banned-author](http://ala.org/bbooks/dear-banned-author).

SILVERMAN, ERICA

### JACK (NOT JACKIE)

(2018)

This children's picture book on gender identity was challenged by a Waukee (IA) Public Library patron objecting to its display on the shelf of new books. Her concerns, and those of another patron, were as follows: "highly controversial subject and needs to be taught by the parent first," "may be confusing to children," "it's a sexual topic," and "it's an adult theme." Both patrons suggested creating a new "parent guided children's books" section for similar books. The item was retained as cataloged.

Source: Waukee Public Library Board documents, April 9, 2019.

STONE, NIC

### DEAR MARTIN

(2017)

Complete description and source for the Columbia County, GA, challenge listed under "Barker, Pat" on page 4.

STOTT, ANN

### WANT TO PLAY TRUCKS?

(2018)

Complete description and source for the Loudoun County, VA, challenge listed under "Bond, Victoria" on page 4.

STRASSER, TODD

### BOOT CAMP

(2007)

Complete description and source for the Westwood, NJ, challenge listed under "Asher, Jay" on page 3.

STRASSER, TODD

### CAN'T GET THERE FROM HERE

(2004)

Complete description and source for the Westwood, NJ, challenge listed under "Asher, Jay" on page 3.

THOMPSON-BIGELOW, JAMILAH

### MOMMY'S KHIMAR

(2018)

Complete description and source for the Loudoun County, VA, challenge listed under "Bond, Victoria" on page 4.

TRUSS, LYNNE

### TWENTY-ODD DUCKS: WHY, EVERY PUNCTUATION MARK COUNTS!

(2018)

A patron of the Lake Oswego (OR) Public Library complained about an image in the 32-page book about punctuation: a beheaded king continued talking and had blood around his neck. The patron said the book was inappropriate for children, and that she had challenged it in other libraries. No formal complaint was filed. Retained.

Source: 2019 Annual Report, State Library of Oregon

TWISS, JILL

### A DAY IN THE LIFE OF MARLON BUNDO

(2018)

A person defaced this parody of *Marlon Bundo's A Day in the Life of the Vice President*, writing in the book that "Girl bunnies marry boy bunnies. This is the way it has always been." Then the person added, "because science." No formal request for

reconsideration was filed. The director announced that typically people are asked to pay for books they have damaged.

Source: "Libraries Celebrate fREADom during Banned Books Week," *Tahlequah Daily Press*, Sept. 25, 2019.

**VERNACCHIO, AL**

### FOR GOODNESS SEX: CHANGING THE WAY WE TALK TO TEENS ABOUT SEXUALITY (2014)

A parent filed a request for reconsideration form, asking, "Do I really want my 12 year old to know how do girls have sex? or how 2 guys dance together? Or learn crude terms and names for body parts?" The book was retained, but moved from the young adult section to the parenting section, which was the book's intended audience.

Source: 2019 Annual Report, State Library of Oregon

**WEAVER, LILA QUINTERO**

### MY YEAR IN THE MIDDLE (2018)

Complete description and source for the Loudoun County, VA, challenge listed under "Bond, Victoria" on page 4.

**WRIGHT, LAWRENCE**

### GOD SAVE TEXAS: A JOURNEY INTO THE SOUL OF THE LONE STAR STATE (2018)

Members of a longtime book club at the Parr Library (Plano, TX) said officials temporarily removed this book from their reading list for being too political. Library officials claim

it was a misunderstanding. The book remains available for circulation.

Source: "Plano Library Removed, Then Reinstated, Lawrence Wright's 'God Save Texas' from Club's Reading List," *The Dallas Morning News*, Jan. 15, 2019.

### EDUCATION JUSTICE PROJECT

The Education Justice Project (EJP), a college-in-prison program of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, established a library in the Danville (IL) Correctional Center. Center officials removed more than 200 books, essays, and journals from the collection, most of them related to African American history, race, and social change. Following testimony and public pressure by the EJP, all of the titles were returned to the EJP's shelves in Danville Correctional Center.

Source: "Illinois Prison Removes More Than 200 Books From Prison Library," *WILL AM-FM-TV-Online*, May 29, 2019.

### DIVERSE CLASSROOM LIBRARY

The Kalamazoo (MI) Public Schools announced a plan to add more diverse content to elementary school classrooms. After complaints from three parents about a story featuring a transgender child, the school announced that the diversity initiative would not encompass LGBTQIA+ materials, focusing instead on racial and ethnic diversity. Then some two dozen people showed up at a

**If there's a local challenge reported in the news, write a powerful letter to the editor in your newspaper. The letter could touch on the benefits of unrestricted reading, a defense of the First Amendment freedom to read, or your personal experience with reading the book.**

board meeting to argue for the inclusion of materials addressing LGBTQIA+ and disability issues. The school board president apologized, and the board reversed its decision. While racial issues remain the focus—more than 6 in 10 students belong to racial or ethnic minorities—the program will also address broader themes, including LGBTQIA+, disabilities, and socioeconomic diversity.

Source: "LGBTQ Issues Complicate Kalamazoo Elementary Book Program," *WMUK*, Dec. 17, 2019.

## PROMOTE THE FREEDOM TO READ IN STYLE

with posters, T-shirts, and mugs from the ALA Store ([ala.org/bbooks/shop](http://ala.org/bbooks/shop)). Sales support the defense of intellectual freedom in libraries and schools.

# BEYOND BOOKS

The following are 2019 public challenges to library or school services and resources that aren't books.

## FILMS

### THE CLUB (2016)

This award-winning Chilean drama about priests and child abuse was challenged at the Deschutes (OR) Public Library District due to scenes of brutal violence, violent sexual acts, explicit sexual language, and because it was "not suitable." Retained.

Source: 2019 Annual Report, State Library of Oregon

### DEATH PROOF (2007)

A patron of the Josephine County (OR) Library insisted that this Tarantino exploitation horror movie be removed from the library because of foul language. Retained.

Source: 2019 Annual Report, State Library of Oregon

### DEATH OF A NATION: CAN WE SAVE AMERICA A SECOND TIME (2018)

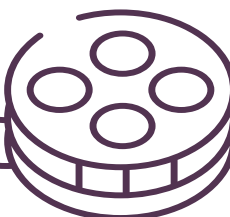
The patron of an unspecified public library in Oregon objected to what he called a "pro-Trump DVD." The docudrama is based on Dinesh D'Souza's book, and the author was a director and writer of the film. Retained.

Source: 2019 Annual Report, State Library of Oregon

### HAPPYTIME MURDERS (2018)

A patron of the Sheridan County (WY) Public Library System requested that the library bar children from checking out the puppet/black comedy because of the sexual scene between two puppets. Status unknown.

Source: Fulmer Public Library Board documents, March 20, 2019.



### LAST TANGO IN PARIS (1972)

A patron of the Deschutes (OR) Public Library District, concerned about allegations of an actual rape of the actress Maria Schneider in the film, called for the library to remove the film and take a stand for women's rights. The film was retained.

Source: 2019 Annual Report, State Library of Oregon

### THE WOLF OF WALL STREET (2013)

A patron of the Antioch (IL) Public Library District objected to the graphic sexual scenes, vulgar language, and heavy drug use in the film. Retained.

Source: Antioch Public Library Board documents, July 2019.

**"Challenges" are not just complaints about books, but rather willful attempts to remove or restrict access to library resources or programming. Challenges can be a written complaint, a form submitted to a library, or a call to action on social media.**

## NEWSPAPERS

### NEW YORK TIMES

Citrus County, FL, commissioners unanimously denied a request from their local library to spend \$2,700 annually on digital subscriptions to the *New York Times*, stating that the paper is "fake news" and they "agree with



Donald Trump." "I don't want the *New York Times* in this county," said one commissioner. The library has a subscription to the print edition.

Source: "Florida County Denies Library Subscriptions to the *New York Times* because It's 'Fake News,'" *Orlando Weekly*, Nov. 5, 2019.

## PROGRAMS & MEETING ROOMS

An increasing number of challenges to library programs and meeting room usage target Drag Queen Story Hours, where the focus is less on the titles, contents, or authors of any specific books, but rather who is reading them. In these special storytime events where picture books are read aloud to children, performers dressed in drag (usually men dressed in theatrically feminine costumes) try to encourage both a love of reading, inclusivity, and kindness. Hate mail, petitions, social media campaigns, death threats, and lawsuits were directed at the performers, administrators, and library workers of 27 states. The Office for Intellectual Freedom recorded 53 challenges to Drag Queen Story Hours in 2019, including in the libraries of Washoe County, NV; Albuquerque, NM; Haverford, PA; Irving, TX; Lafayette, LA; Louisville, KY; Lexington Park, MD; Putnam, TN; Lafayette, CO; and Greenville, SC. Events that were not cancelled demonstrated a positive message of LGBTQIA+ support in their community.

Source: *Journal of Intellectual Freedom and Privacy* Summer 2019, Spring 2019, and Fall-Winter 2018

**The Jonesboro (AR) Public Library invited trans author Meredith Russo to its annual authors program.** Public protest persuaded the library to request police presence at the event. In previous years, schools attended this event as a field trip. According to library officials, “Due to safety concerns that have arisen, the schools have decided they will not be attending this year.” The event was held.

Source: “First M.L. King, Then a Trans Youth Author Protest. Jonesboro Editor Says Enough!,” *Arkansas Times*, Oct. 17, 2019.

**The Jacksonville (FL) Public Library cancelled its Storybook Pride Prom at Riverside’s Willowbranch Library after Raymond Johnson, founder of Biblical Concepts Ministries in Jacksonville, and Elizabeth Johnston, a blogger and author who goes by “The Activist Mommy,” asked their followers to call the library and “express your disgust that this perversion is taking place in a taxpayer funded library.”** After a flood of calls both protesting and supporting the event, the library concluded that it could not provide “safety and security for everybody involved,” particularly gay minors.

Source: “Jacksonville Library Cancels Sold-Out Pride Prom Event, Says It Can’t Provide Adequate Safety,” *The Florida Times-Union*, June 24, 2019.

**The author of *Kid Activists*, Robin Stevenson, reported that her visit to the Longfellow Elementary School in Wheaton, IL, was canceled because of a parent complaining about the book’s inclusion of Harvey Milk.** The school responded that the concern was not so much the topic, as the fact that they did not have the opportunity to inform parents of the content and give them the opportunity to opt out.

Source: “Author Says District 200 Canceled Visit Due To LGBT Content,” *Patch.com*, Nov. 7, 2019.

**The Grassroots Conservatives booked a closed meeting room at the Monroe County (IN) Public Library and hosted a speaker associated with the American Identity Movement, formerly known as Identity Evropa.** Identity Evropa is considered to be a white nationalist movement by the Southern Poverty Law Center. When news leaked on social media, there were protests. One person was escorted from




the library for arguing with the protesters. At the end of the talk, the speakers found their car had been covered with fake blood.

Source: “Schooner Creek Farm Owner Sarah Dye Criticizes Farmers Market Protests Thursday,” *Indiana Daily Student*, Sept. 27, 2019.

**A parent complained about the Daviess County (KY) Public Library District’s program that distributes overstock books to participating teens.** She posted excerpts from the books to social media, saying that the books “encouraged promiscuity and for teenagers to lose their virginity.” Parents of teens receiving the books are required to sign a disclaimer that states “I understand that Young Adults titles may contain controversial themes, mature content, and/or profanity. I accept that it is the responsibility of the teen and their parents/legal guardians to determine what is and is not appropriate reading material for a particular teen.” The library said it would replace the books for that family, and attach the disclaimer to each future box.

Source: “Library Receives Backlash for Mature Content in Teen Book Program,” *The Owensboro Times*, Feb. 28, 2019.

**The Worcester County (MD) Library cancelled a lecture on the U.S. Constitution hosted by the president of the library’s foundation and former chair of the Worcester County Democratic Central Committee after it received protests and a threat from local groups who said the lecture would address “how to either impeach Trump or**



remove him from office” and how to “collude and conspire to take away your vote.” While county commissioners praised the professionalism of the director and board, a member of the Republican Women of Worcester County later expressed her own concern with what she contended was the partisanship of the lecture, referring to the speaker’s previous affiliation with the Worcester County Democrats.

Source: “Ranck Praised for Handling of Library Rancor,” *Ocean City Today*, March 28, 2019.

**The Anne Arundel County (MD) Public Library sponsored a Drag Queen Story Time**, which was attended by more than 100 people. Following the event, the board of trustees adopted a policy to give themselves final say over library programs. While a board representative stated that the intent was not to censor or preempt library staff, many programs—including at least a dozen LGBT-related events—had been put on hold, creating logistical problems for staff. The programs were retained after the board unanimously voted to adopt a revised version of the policy that no longer gives the board voting power or calls for programs to be flagged as “potentially controversial,” and instead asks for notification of any programs that “merit their special attention.”

Source: “Anne Arundel Library Board Puts 16 LGBTQ, Women’s Health Programs ‘In Limbo,’” *Capital Gazette*, March 13, 2019.

**The Mid-Continent (MO) Public Library sponsored a “Trans 101” program**, an educational program aimed at teens and adults intended to provide education and conversation about transgender identity and experiences. While the event was well attended, one person submitted a petition to

cancel all future such events. The second Trans 101 program was postponed but reinstated following circulation of a supportive petition. The library board continued to hear from supporters and objectors at library board meetings. Without authorization or endorsement from the board, a board member wrote a personal letter to the newspaper, writing that “a once safe community setting known as the public library has become a space that, in the guise of intellectual freedom, wants to change thinking on voyeurism and gender confusion, while promoting materials and programs that lead children toward being sexually exploited.”

Source: “Mid-Continent Library Evaluating Future of Transgender Program,” *KSHB*, Sept. 24, 2019.

**Following protests against a visit from Golgarg Bashi, the author of *P is for Palestine: A Palestine Alphabet Book***, the Highland Park (NJ) Public Library canceled the talk. The chief concern of the many Jewish residents of the community was the page on “I is for Intifada”; intifada is considered by many as an endorsement and encouragement of violence against the Jewish state. The visit was rescheduled for later in the year, and held despite protests.

Source: “‘P is for Palestine’ Event Held in Highland Park Despite Protests,” *MyCentralJersey*, Oct. 20, 2019.

**Author Lesléa Newman was invited to speak at a Jewish day school in her hometown of Brooklyn** about her latest book, *Gittel’s Journey: An Ellis Island Story*. However, after the school cancelled due to an unanticipated field trip, Newman said online that she believes she was disinvited, which she inferred was due to school officials discovering that

**A “ban” is a removal of materials. Sometimes the ban is a decision made by a committee, and other times an administrator or staff member removes resources without following a library’s policy. A ban can also be the cancellation of a program or display.**

she was a lesbian. Newman is also the author of *Heather Has Two Mommies*.

Source: “The Uninvited by Lesléa Newman,” *Nerdy Book Club*, Nov. 12, 2019.

**Ohio House Speaker Larry Householder criticized gay pride events at public libraries**, contributing to the cancellation of a library’s teen pride event in Licking County, which is half of his district. Householder called the event at the Licking County Library “a stunningly bizarre breach of the public trust,” and said “taxpayers aren’t interested in seeing their hard-earned dollars being used to teach teenage boys how to become drag queens.” Citing safety concerns, the director canceled the meeting. It was rescheduled for a local bookstore.

Source: “Householder Speaks Out on LGBTQ Events,” *Akron Beacon Journal*, June 1, 2019.

**An event by the Delaware County (OH) District Library was geared to children of any gender ages 12 to 17 interested in learning “the basics” of dressing in drag.** Those who objected to and supported the class made many comments in public and at board meetings. Eventually, the event was canceled due to safety concerns.

Source: “Updated: Drag 101 Riles Some, but Delaware County Library Stands Firm,” *ThisWeek Community News*, May 23, 2019.





### **The Estacada (OR) Public Library held various Pride**

Month events, which prompted complaints by one resident to County Commissioners, a county website, and on a closed group on Facebook, saying that the events “must stop.” No formal complaint was communicated to the library, and a subsequent event proceeded as planned and without incident.

Source: 2019 Annual Report, State Library of Oregon

### **Camille Paglia was scheduled to give a talk titled “Ambiguous**

Images: Sexual Duality and Sexual Multiplicity in Western Art” for the University of Arts Philadelphia, where Paglia has taught for 30 years and is a tenured faculty member. A group of students demanded that the talk be cancelled and Paglia fired for previous comments they considered transphobic. (Paglia identifies as transgender.) During the event, which took place with peaceful protesters outside, a person pulled the fire alarm. Afterward, many professors at the institution were reluctant to go on record with their thoughts, pointing out that the university no longer awarded tenure, a guarantee of academic freedom.

Source: “Camille Paglia Can’t Say That,” *The Atlantic*, May 1, 2019.

### **Author Julia Watts, who has written about LGBTQIA+ teens**

growing up in Appalachia, reports that she was abruptly uninvited, and her name removed from the website of the Knox County (TN) Public Library’s LitUp Festival. Allegedly, one of the adult festival coordinators was fearful that the LGBTQIA+ themes of her fiction weren’t suitable for teens. Library officials claim that while they “love” Watts, who has worked with them on many programs,

they learned that some of her books are categorized as “erotica” (Watts says, “mildly romantic”), and that the age of the conference attendees was 12 to 15.

Source: “Young Adult Author Pulled from Knox Library’s Teen Festival because She Also Writes ‘Erotica,’” *Knoxville News Sentinel*, Sept. 4, 2019.

### **A middle school in Texas abruptly canceled author Jen**

Petro-Roy’s visit to promote her debut novel *P.S. I Miss You*. According to the author, a school administrator said that by teaching this book, she’d be promoting an LGBTQIA+ “agenda.” Petro-Roy reports that many authors touching on LGBTQIA+ themes are experiencing greater frequency of such cancellations, although schools are rarely forthcoming about the reason.

Source: “LGBTQ Books are Being Censored in Middle Schools. Authors are Speaking Out,” *Entertainment Weekly*, Aug. 19, 2019.

### **Two hours before a planned talk at the Leander (TX) Public**

Library, award-winning transgender comic book writer Lilah Sturges learned that the program had been cancelled due to “unforeseen circumstances.” The cancellation followed a highly publicized controversy over a pride festival and story time event held by an LGBTQ-friendly church. After protests, the city council ended library meeting room rentals and some library programming. A few months later, the longtime library director announced her departure.

Source: “Leander Public Library Abruptly Cancels Appearance of Popular Comic Author,” *Hill Country News*, July 10, 2019.

### **The Women’s Liberation Front—a trans-exclusionary group that describes itself as “feminist”—booked a meeting**

room at the Seattle (WA) Public Library for a public talk that was described by the group as “a critical analysis of gender identity” that will “make powerful arguments for sex-based women’s rights.” There were immediate demands by trans activists and allies to cancel the event, but the library determined that it was required by its First Amendment obligations to host the meeting. The Gender Justice League, a Seattle nonprofit that advocates for gender and sexuality justice, criticized the decision, saying “the end result of a hate group using the library as a venue to ‘critique’ the existence of a minority group creates a hostile environment and is unacceptable.” Despite a protest, a bomb threat, interruptions, and arrests, the event was held as planned.

Source: “Amid Outcry, Seattle Public Library Weighs Decision to Provide Venue for ‘Radical Feminist’ Event Criticized as Anti-Trans,” *The Seattle Times*, Dec. 9, 2019.

### **The mayor of Charleston, WV, an invited speaker at the West**

Virginia Book Festival, protested when Orson Scott Card, author of *Ender’s Game*, was also invited to speak at the festival. The mayor said Card had a “well documented history of views that are contrary to the City of Charleston’s commitment to being an inclusive and welcoming community,” and asked the festival to reevaluate its invitation to him. When the festival did not withdraw Card’s invitation, she withdrew as a speaker, saying “I will not support hate speech of any kind.” Card spoke at the festival despite protests.

Source: “Charleston Mayor Cancels Book Festival Appearance, Citing Anti-LGBTQ Author,” *Charleston Gazette-Mail*, Oct. 3, 2019.

## DISPLAYS AND ARTWORK

A group of students, educators, and artists recommended that a mural depicting scenes in the life of George Washington (including the image of a murdered Native American, and a slave) be removed from a San Francisco high school because it doesn't represent the school's values. First, the school board voted to paint over the New Deal-era artwork. After public outcry, they amended the vote to digitize the work and merely cover it up.

Source: "High School's George Washington Mural Doesn't Represent Its Values and Should be Removed, Group Says," *The Washington Post*, May 8, 2019.

**The Otis Library (Norwich, Connecticut) installed a memorial** to thousands of Sikhs killed 35 years ago in India. The memorial accused the Indian government of genocide. Then India's consul general in New York allegedly threatened the library's nonprofit status and called the library's executive director to discuss the memorial. India calls the deaths "riots," not state-sponsored genocide. "Otis Library and the Norwich Monuments Committee jointly agreed to remove the plaque, flags, and portrait," said the president of the library board of trustees. Local Sikhs have begun planning an independent Sikh museum in Connecticut.

Source: "Otis Library Removes Sikh Genocide Memorial 3 Months after Unveiling It," *The Bulletin*, Oct. 11, 2019.

**An Oak Park, IL, school district removed a 1937 Works Progress Administration (WPA) mural** from Julian Middle School because it did not reflect today's more diverse student population. The mural, called "Child and Sports Winter," features only white children. The mural, according to district officials,

was moved and joins other WPA artwork in Washington, D.C.

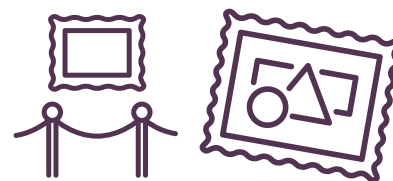
Source: "Two More Historic Murals that Oak Park Officials Say Don't 'Reflect' the Community Will be Removed from Schools," *Chicago Tribune*, May 2, 2019.

**A patron of the Park Ridge (IL) Public Library inquired if the Works Progress Administration mural** called "Indians Cede the Land" was insulting to Native Americans and questioned its display in the library. In addition, a neighboring community removed similar murals from school libraries in Oak Park, IL. Ultimately, library officials worked with the acting director of Newberry Library's McNickle Center for American Indian and Indigenous Studies to provide additional historical context and education about the portrait and the period it was created. The mural remains.

Source: "Instead of Removal, Park Ridge Library Will Add Historical Context to Mural of Native Americans Ceding Land to Government," *Chicago Tribune*, May 16, 2019.

**The Rumford (ME) Public Library's banned books display** included two LGBTQIA+ titles, *Two Boys Kissing* and *My Lesbian Experience with Loneliness*.

Following protests, an interim town manager investigated how displays were chosen and wrote, "The current practice regarding 'banned books' seems tantamount to providing certain individual town employees with their own political platforms during work hours." The board of trustees, which noted that it was they, not



the town, that was charged with authority to manage the library, adopted a display policy, which gave final approval to the director. However, the director resigned a month later.

Source: "Rumford's Banned Books Display Will Stay," *American Libraries*, Sept. 17, 2019.


**The University of Minnesota set up an exhibit called "The ABCs of It,"** featuring the works of several children's authors drawn from the children's literature archive housed at the Elmer L. Andersen Library. Some children's authors were concerned that the exhibit spotlighted classics without providing context that some titles were considered by some to be racist, such as *The Cat in the Hat* by Dr. Seuss and *Caddie Woodlawn* by Carol Ryrie Brink. This led the university to expand the exhibit and offer an additional program about racism in children's literature.

Source: "An ABC of Controversy: The Kerlan Collection Tweaks Exhibit in Response to Concerns About Racist Content," *Publishers Weekly*, March 12, 2019.

**The Kearney (NE) Public Library put up a pride display.** A patron proposed changing the library's policy to prohibit such displays, or offer equal access to Biblical perspectives. The library board voted against the proposed policy alternatives.

Source: Kearney Public Library Board documents, Sept. 10, 2019.

**When a challenge occurs in your community, attend a local board meeting and explain why you think the resource should remain in the library.**



**Doane University (Crete, NE) library staff curated an exhibit** of historical photographs and other memorabilia from student scrapbooks housed in university archives. A student complained about two photographs in a display called “Parties of the Past,” which showed students attending a 1926 Halloween party in blackface. Following the complaint, the director removed the photographs in an attempt to avoid “external censorship,” but the provost directed the removal of the entire exhibit. The director was placed on suspension, but later reinstated.

Source: “Colliding Values at Doane,” *Inside Higher Ed*, May 6, 2019.

**A local nonprofit that curated an art exhibit called “Love and Fear,”** held at the Montclair (NJ) Public Library, removed a painting showing President Donald Trump wearing a hat with the words “Make America White Again.” The curators said they made the decision because some of the language in the painting violated a library policy about

vulgar language. But the library no longer enforces the policy and was not consulted about the decision either to display or remove the piece. A week later, the painting was restored to the exhibit.

Source: “Anti-Trump Painting Removed From Art Exhibit In Montclair,” *Patch.com*, April 11, 2019.

**At the Oregon City (OR) Public Library, two people complained** separately about the library’s Pride Month display set up in an area away from the children’s reading section. One parent complained that her children had seen the display and she was upset that it was not balanced by other views or values. Another parent said he would not return with his children while the display was in place. Staff listened to patron concerns; the displays were retained.

Source: 2019 Annual Report, State Library of Oregon

**The Lincoln City (OR) Driftwood Public Library Pride** Month display was nearly cancelled because the city manager worried displays and

programming could be seen as endorsing LGBTQ issues. The library director, its governing board, and the city manager created policies on displays and programming, and the library programs continued as planned.

Source: 2019 Annual Report, State Library of Oregon

**As part of a City of Shoreline public art program titled “Pop-Up Pianos 2019,”** a local artist salvaged a female mannequin to create a “sculpturally enhanced piano” displayed at the Shoreline branch of the King County (WA) Library System. The exhibit immediately garnered patron complaints that “the female mannequin’s nude torso was inappropriate for children.” When requested by the library to cover up the torso, the artist objected, but eventually put a tank top over the piece, saying that she would have liked to add a message on the shirt: “Censored by the Library.”

Source: “Shoreline Prudes Cover Up Nippleless Mannequin at the Library,” *The Stranger*, Aug. 6, 2019.

## ONLINE SERVICES & RESOURCES

### HOLLINS UNIVERSITY YEARBOOK

The president of Hollins University (Roanoke, VA) temporarily removed four editions of yearbooks from its digital archives that included images of former students in blackface and racially insensitive

cartoon drawings. Some groups urged the university to restore access, including university librarians, a group working to address the legacies of slavery and racial inequality, the Office for Intellectual Freedom, and the Society of American



Archivists. Hard copies of the yearbooks are available, and each edition will include a message that acknowledges the racist portrayals of African Americans.

Source: “Hollins University Temporarily Pulls Yearbooks with Blackface from Digital Archives,” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, April 3, 2019.

# TOP 10 CHALLENGED BOOKS OF 2019

The ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom tracked 377 challenges to library, school, and university materials and services in 2019. Overall, 566 books were targeted. Here are the “Top 10 Most Challenged Books in 2019,” along with the reasons cited for censoring the books:

## #1 **GEORGE**

by Alex Gino

Challenged, banned, restricted, and hidden to avoid controversy; for LGBTQIA+ content and a transgender character; because schools and libraries should not “put books in a child’s hand that require discussion”; for sexual references; and for conflicting with a religious viewpoint and “traditional family structure”

## #2 **BEYOND MAGENTA: TRANSGENDER TEENS SPEAK OUT**

by Susan Kuklin

Challenged for LGBTQIA+ content, for “its effect on any young people who would read it,” and for concerns that it was sexually explicit and biased

## #3 **A DAY IN THE LIFE OF MARLON BUNDO**

by Jill Twiss,  
illustrated by EG Keller

Challenged and vandalized for LGBTQIA+ content and political viewpoints, for concerns that it is “designed to pollute the morals of its readers,” and for not including a content warning

## #4 **SEX IS A FUNNY WORD**

by Cory Silverberg,  
illustrated by Fiona Smyth

Challenged, banned, and relocated for LGBTQIA+ content; for discussing gender identity and sex education; and for concerns that the title and illustrations were “inappropriate”

## #5 **PRINCE & KNIGHT**

by Daniel Haack,  
illustrated by Stevie Lewis

Challenged and restricted for featuring a gay marriage and LGBTQIA+ content; for being “a deliberate attempt to indoctrinate young children” with the potential to cause confusion, curiosity, and gender dysphoria; and for conflicting with a religious viewpoint

## #6 **I AM JAZZ**

by Jessica Herthel and  
Jazz Jennings, illustrated by  
Shelagh McNicholas

Challenged and relocated for LGBTQIA+ content, for a transgender character, and for confronting a topic that is “sensitive, controversial, and politically charged”

## #7 **THE HANDMAID’S TALE**

by Margaret Atwood

Banned and challenged for profanity and for “vulgarity and sexual overtones”

## #8 **DRAMA**

written and illustrated by  
Raina Telgemeier

Challenged for LGBTQIA+ content and for concerns that it goes against “family values/morals”

## #9 **HARRY POTTER (SERIES)**

by J. K. Rowling

Banned and forbidden from discussion for referring to magic and witchcraft, for containing actual curses and spells, and for characters that use “nefarious means” to attain goals

## #10 **AND TANGO MAKES THREE**

by Peter Parnell and  
Justin Richardson,  
illustrated by Henry Cole

Challenged and relocated for LGBTQIA+ content

