2000-2001 Books Challenged or Banned

Robert P. Doyle

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Sponsored by the American Booksellers Association
the American Booksellers Foundation for Free Expression
the American Library Association
the American Society of Journalists and Authors
the Association of American Publishers
Banned Books Week 2001 is the twentieth annual celebration of the freedom to read. This freedom, not only to choose what we read but also to be able to select from a full array of possibilities, is firmly rooted in the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which guarantees freedom of speech and freedom of press. Even as we revel in the increasing quantity and availability of information and reading material, we must maintain vigilance to assure that access to this material is preserved. Threats against the freedom to read still exist and come from all quarters and all political persuasions. Quite simply, censors are those who try to limit the freedom of others to choose what they read, see, or hear, even if the motivation for the restriction is well-intentioned.

Sex, profanity, and racism remain the primary categories of objections, and most incidents occur in schools and school libraries. Frequently, challenges are motivated by the desire to protect children. While the cause is noble and commendable, this method of protection contains hazards far greater than exposure to the "evil" against which the protection is leveled. Supreme Court Justice William Brennan, in Texas v. Johnson, said, "If there is a bedrock principle underlying the First Amendment, it is that the Government may not prohibit the expression of an idea simply because society finds the idea itself offensive or disagreeable." Individuals may restrict what they themselves or their children read, but they must not call on governmental or public agencies to prevent others from reading or seeing that material.

The challenges documented in this list are not just someone expressing a point of view regarding these materials; rather, the challengers have asked that the material be removed from the school curriculum or library, thus restricting access to it by others. Even when the eventual outcome allows the book to stay on the library shelves, and even when the incident is a lone protester, the censorship attempt is real. Someone has tried to restrict another person’s ability to choose. Challenges are as important to document as actual ban-

nings, where a book is removed from the shelves of a library or bookstore or from the curriculum at a school. Attempts to censor lead to voluntary curtailment of expression by those who seek to avoid controversy, a situation as critical as an actual banning, since in these cases the material may not be published or may not be purchased by a bookstore, library, or school district.

We have reason to be especially celebratory this year. Due to the commitment of parents, students, librarians, teachers, and other concerned citizens, more and more of the challenges are unsuccessful, and the reading material remains available.

It should be noted that this bibliography is incomplete because many prohibitions against free speech and expression remain undocumented. Surveys indicate approximately 85 percent of the challenges to library materials receive no media attention and remain unreported. Moreover, this list is limited to books and does not include challenges to magazines, newspapers, films, broadcasts, plays, performances, electronic publications, or exhibits.

This bibliography represents books challenged, restricted, removed, or banned in 2000—2001 as reported in the Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom from May 2000 through March 2001.


Alvarez, Julia. In the Time of the Butterflies. Algonquin; Plume. Withdrawn from inclusion at the Paul D. Schreiber High School in Port Washington, N.Y. (2000) because of a drawing of a homemade bomb. The text preceding and following the handwritten diagram does not provide details or instructions. The novel was nominated for the National Book Critics Circle Award in 1995 and named a Best Book for Young Adults by the American Library Association. Source: Jan. 2001, pp. 13-14.


Duncan, Lois. Daughters of Eve. Little. Removed from the Fairfax County, Va. middle school libraries and classrooms (2000) because it "promotes risky behavior and violence and also seeks to prejudice young vulnerable minds on several issues." Source: July 2000, p. 105.

because school officials said the book is too difficult for middle school students and that it could cause harassment against students seen with it. The American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California filed suit in Doe v. Anaheim Union High School District alleging that the removal is "a pretext for viewpoint-based censorship." The ACLU claims no other books have been removed from the junior high library for similar reasons, even though several, such as works by Shakespeare and Dickens, are more difficult reading. The ACLU contends that the school officials engaged in unconstitutional viewpoint discrimination by removing the book because it contains gay and lesbian material. Source: Mar. 2001, p. 53.


Guterson, David. Snow Falling on Cedars. Harcourt; Thordilke Pr.; Vintage. Restricted by the South Kitsap, Wash. School District board (2000) after critics complained about the book’s sexual content and profanity. After being approved by committees at the high school and district levels, the book was being considered for the district’s approved reading list for high school students. Students are not required to read listed books of which they or their parents disapprove. Source: July 2000, p. 106.


Kenan, Randall. James Baldwin. Chelsea House Pub. Removed from the Anaheim, Calif. school district (2000) because school officials said the book is too difficult for middle school students and that it could cause harassment against students seen with it. The American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California filed suit in Doe v. Anaheim Union High School District alleging that the removal is "a pretext for viewpoint-based censorship." The ACLU claims no other books have been removed from the junior high library for similar reasons, even though several, such as works by Shakespeare and Dickens, are more difficult reading. The ACLU contends that the school officials engaged in unconstitutional viewpoint discrimination by removing the book because it contains gay and lesbian material. Source: Mar. 2001, p. 53.


Martin, W. K. *Marlene Dietrich*. Chelsea House Pubs. Removed from the Anaheim, Calif. school district (2000) because school officials said the book is too difficult for middle school students and that it could cause harassment against students seen with it. The American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California filed suit in Doe v. * Anaheim Union High School District* alleging that the removal is "a pretext for viewpoint-based censorship." The ACLU claims no other books have been removed from the junior high library for similar reasons, even though several, such as works by Shakespeare and Dickens, are more difficult reading. The ACLU contends that the school officials engaged in unconstitutional viewpoint discrimination by removing the book because it contains gay and lesbian material. Source: Mar. 2001, p. 53.


Meyer, Michael, ed. *Bedford Introduction to Literature*. St. Martin. The Paxon School for Advanced Studies in Jacksonville, Fla. (2000) principal authorized teachers to cut out the play *Angels in America* from the textbook. The Duval County School Board first banned the play three years ago after learning that it was being used in a class at Douglas Anderson School of the Arts. The play is the first half of Tony Kushner’s work depicting the United States in the 1980s as the AIDS epidemic began to spread. It won the 1993 Pulitzer Prize for drama and several Tony awards, including best play. Source: Mar. 2001, p. 56.


Mungo, Raymond. *Liberace*. Chelsea House Pubs. Removed from the Anaheim, Calif. school district (2000) because school officials said the book is too difficult for middle school students and that it could cause harassment against students seen with it. The American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California filed suit in Doe v. * Anaheim Union High School District* alleging that the removal is "a pretext for viewpoint-based censorship." The ACLU claims no other books have been removed from the junior high library for similar reasons, even though several, such as works by Shakespeare and Dickens, are more difficult reading. The ACLU contends that the school officials engaged in unconstitutional viewpoint discrimination by removing the book because it contains gay and lesbian material. Source: Mar. 2001, p. 53.

O’Brien, Sharon. *Willa Cather*. Chelsea House Pubs. Removed from the Anaheim, Calif. school district (2000) because school officials said the book is too difficult for middle school students and that it could cause harassment against students seen with it. The American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California filed suit in Doe v. * Anaheim Union High School District* alleging that the removal is "a pretext for viewpoint-based censorship." The ACLU claims no other books have been removed from the junior high library for similar reasons, even though several, such as works by Shakespeare and Dickens, are more difficult reading. The ACLU contends that the school officials engaged in unconstitutional viewpoint discrimination by removing the book because it contains gay and lesbian material. Source: Mar. 2001, p. 53.


**Snyder, Jane McIntosh.** *Sappho*. Chelsea House Pub. Removed from the Anaheim, Calif. school district (2000) because school officials said the book is too difficult for middle school students and that it could cause harassment against students seen with it. The American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California filed suit in *Doe v. Anaheim Union High School District* alleging that the removal is “a pretext for viewpoint-based censorship.” The ACLU claims no other books have been removed from the junior high library for similar reasons, even though several, such as works by Shakespeare and Dickens, are more difficult reading. The ACLU contends that the school officials engaged in unconstitutional viewpoint discrimination by removing the book because if contains gay and lesbian material. Source: Mar. 2001, p. 53.


**Wolf, Daniel.** *T. E. Lawrence*. Chelsea House Pub. Removed from the Anaheim, Calif. school district (2000) because school officials said the book is too difficult for middle school students and that it could cause harassment against students seen with it. The American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California filed suit in *Doe v. Anaheim Union High School District* alleging that the removal is “a pretext for viewpoint-based censorship.” The ACLU claims no other books have been removed from the junior high library for similar reasons, even though several, such as works by Shakespeare and Dickens, are more difficult reading. The ACLU contends that the school officials engaged in unconstitutional viewpoint discrimination by removing the book because it contains gay and lesbian material. Source: Mar. 2001, p. 53.

**Zweiman, Gilda.** *Martina Navratilova*. Chelsea House pub. Removed from the Anaheim, Calif. school district (2000) because school officials said the book is too difficult for middle school students and that it could cause harassment against students seen with it. The American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California filed suit in *Doe v. Anaheim Union High School District* alleging that the removal is “a pretext for viewpoint-based censorship.” The ACLU claims no other books have been removed from the junior high library for similar reasons, even though several, such as works by Shakespeare and Dickens, are more difficult reading. The ACLU contends that the school officials engaged in unconstitutional viewpoint discrimination by removing the book because it contains gay and lesbian material. Source: Mar. 2001, p. 53.

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Shipping and Handling Charges (based on subtotal)
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- $20-$49.99: $7.00
- $50-$99.99: $9.00
- $100-$149.99: $10.00
- $150-$199.99: $11.00
- $200 and up: 8% of total

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