



ILLINOIS LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

Because Libraries Matter

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## Press Release

**The 2020 Illinois Library Association Intellectual Freedom Award is awarded to Rebecca Ginsburg. The award, presented by the ILA Intellectual Freedom Committee, recognizes an individual or group for outstanding contributions in defending intellectual freedom or the advancement of these principles. The award is sponsored by the Intellectual Freedom Fund and was established in 2007 in honor of Robert P. Doyle.**

Rebecca Ginsburg is the Director of the [Education Justice Project](#) (EJP), based at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. EJP offers education programs to individuals incarcerated at the Danville Correctional Center (DCC), a men's medium-security state prison. In 2019, more than 200 books were removed from the EJP library at the DCC, including *Up From Slavery* by Booker T. Washington, *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?: And Other Conversations About Race* by Beverly Daniel Tatum, and *The Souls of Black Folk* by W.E.B. DuBois. The book removal was part of the Illinois Department of Corrections' growing practice of restricting access to reading materials focusing on issues of race and prisons.

Ginsburg championed the fight to restore access to the books and raise awareness of prison censorship by creating the [Freedom to Learn Campaign](#), a coalition of 67 organizations and hundreds of individuals. Her work culminated in a special legislative hearing that changed the terms of future book access inside prisons to protect incarcerated readers across the state. She did this knowing the high stakes for the EJP and her students. Thanks to Ginsburg's advocacy, the books were returned to the EJP library and the Illinois Department of Corrections developed new guidelines for prison libraries.

Freedom to choose what materials shall be available in libraries is a core concern of ILA and this honorarium recognizes the sharing of that responsibility by others.

The award is sponsored by the Intellectual Freedom Fund established in 2017 in honor of Robert P. Doyle on the occasion of his retirement in recognition of his extraordinary personal and professional commitment to ILA and to the principles of intellectual freedom.

The Intellectual Freedom Award will be presented at a ceremony that will be held in conjunction with the 2020 Illinois Library Association Annual Conference, which will take place virtually in October.

For further information, contact the Illinois Library Association.

For Immediate Release