

NATIONAL COALITION AGAINST CENSORSHIP

NATIONAL GROUPS CONDEMN INCREASING ATTACKS ON LGBTQ BOOKS

Books featuring LGBTQ characters and themes are under attack in schools and libraries across the United States. When public schools or libraries yield to pressure to remove, red-flag or limit access to these books, they undermine free speech principles, further isolate LGBTQ youth and deprive all young people of opportunities to increase their empathy and respect for differences.

Eighty percent of the ten most frequently challenged books in 2019 told queer stories, depicting same-sex relationships or trans and non-binary experiences in a variety of ways, tailored to readers of all age ranges. Critics denounce these books as “pornographic” and label them “obscene,” even when they contain no descriptions of sexual conduct. (One of the most challenged books of the past two decades, *And Tango Makes Three*, tells the story of two male penguins adopting an egg to create a family in a zoo.) Special interest groups have also threatened violence in efforts to shut down events like Drag Queen Story Hour and readings by trans authors.

When LGBTQ stories are silenced in this way, LGBTQ youth and children from LGBTQ families get the message that their own stories—their very lives—do not have value, that they are shameful. However, reading stories that acknowledge their experiences, in which they can recognize themselves and their families, reinforces their sense of self-worth and helps them overcome the experience of and feelings associated with social marginalization.

At a time when LGBTQ youth are being bullied, and suffer from depression and attempt suicide at higher rates than other students, LGBTQ books play a crucial role in educational efforts to encourage respect for differences. They have the power to save lives.

Parents who object to specific books in schools may ask for alternate assignments for their own children. What they cannot, and must not be permitted to, do is decide what books, art or ideas are available to other young people. Such decisions should be made by trained educators, librarians and curriculum development professionals based on objective educational reasoning.

Public school administrators and other government officials (including school board members, principals and library boards) who allow the personal beliefs of a vocal minority to determine what students can read and teachers can teach not only violate the rights to freedom of expression and information of all community members, protected under the First Amendment, they endanger the well-being of the country’s most precious resource: its youth.

Co-signed by:

**National Coalition Against
Censorship
American Association of University
Professors
American Booksellers for Free
Expression
American Civil Liberties Union
American Ethical Union
American Library Association
American Society of Journalists &
Authors, First Amendment
Committee
Americans United for Separation of
Church and State
Association of American Publishers
Association of University Presses
Authors Guild
Children's Literature Association
Comic Book Legal Defense Fund
Creative Coalition
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DKT Liberty Project
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GLSEN**

**Human Rights Campaign
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International Literacy Association
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