



December 13, 2021

Statement from the Oregon Library Association and the Oregon Intellectual Freedom Committee

RE: Materials Challenges and Intellectual Freedom

This is a joint statement regarding attempts to remove materials that focus on LGBTQIA+ issues and books by Black authors or that document the Black experience or the experiences of other BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) individuals. This statement comes from the Oregon Library Association (OLA) and the Oregon Intellectual Freedom Committee (OIFC), with input and support from the OLA EDI and Antiracism Committee. The Oregon Library Association (OLA) is a professional organization of Oregon library workers and includes the Oregon Intellectual Freedom Committee. The OIFC provides expertise and support for intellectual freedom issues on behalf of the Oregon Library Association and is the professional committee with the charges to support intellectual freedom and to respond to censorship. The OLA in combination with OIFC supports Oregon school and public libraries in managing challenges to materials within their library collections.

Over the course of the past year, libraries across Oregon have received a number of both formal and informal complaints regarding the materials within their collections. Nationally, libraries and communities are having similar experiences, as seen on the [Office of Intellectual Freedom Blog](#) site, which weekly outlines challenges across the United States.

Materials that have most often been targeted for restriction or removal include topics specific to the LGTBQIA+ experience or on subject matters that relate to race, racism, or the experiences of the BIPOC community. Individuals who want books removed often allege that the materials are “pornographic” or otherwise unsuited for minors. On review, panels and even courts generally find such charges to be an entirely subjective characterization of excerpts taken out of context, and without merit in view of the literary work as a whole.

In circumvention of established due processes for filing a complaint regarding library materials, many of these challenges have used cyberbullying and personal intimidation tactics. OLA and OIFC condemn the use of intimidation and extralegal means aimed at censorship which are antithetical to ALA’s [Freedom to Read statements](#). We fully support parents' involvement in education and guidance in media selections for their own children, but we stand firmly behind our [Library Bill of Rights](#) and the Freedom to Read statements, and against parental overreach actions which violate the First Amendment rights and dignity of others.

The mere presence of a book in a library does not indicate endorsement of the contents by the library or approval of the ideas presented. Libraries have a duty, as publicly funded agencies, to provide resources that ensure equitable service and representation of the diverse groups and perspectives of their community. As the new ninth principle within the [ALA Code of Ethics](#) states:

“We affirm the inherent dignity and rights of every person. We work to recognize and dismantle systemic and individual biases; to confront inequity and oppression; to enhance diversity and inclusion; and to advance racial and social justice in our libraries, communities, profession, and associations through awareness, advocacy, education, collaboration, services, and allocation of resources and spaces.”

The ALA’s [EDI Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights](#) further states, “All community members will feel truly welcomed and included when they see themselves reflected in collections that speak to their cultures and life experiences... Socially excluded, marginalized, and underrepresented people, not just the mainstream majority, should be able to see themselves reflected in the resources and programs that libraries offer.”

OLA and OIFC reaffirm the [ALA Statement on Book Censorship](#) and support all Oregon libraries in their efforts to protect materials from censorship, especially the voices of the oppressed.

OLA and OIFC support all readers, regardless of age, background, gender, or race the undeniable right to information with a full range of ideas, opinions, concepts, topics and thoughts. Of course not every book is right for every reader, but the right of every reader to read what they choose must be honored.

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