

## Rogue Librarians

### Bonus Episode: Legislation Involving Banned Books

Welcome to a bonus episode of Rogue Librarians. We're usually a podcast in which three librarians discuss banned books, but today we will be discussing current and proposed legislation involving banned books. We are your hosts, Marian, Dorothy, Alanna, and we are the Rogue Librarians. We would love for you to participate in our discussion. Please visit [www.theroguelibrarians.com](http://www.theroguelibrarians.com) or follow us on Instagram or Facebook @roguelibrarianspod or on Twitter @RLibrarians.

Um Okay, so we're gonna do something a little different to start our episode this time. We usually talk about a book that we've been reading, but we thought it might be interesting to stir the pot a little bit and um to share one of our favorite books from childhood. So Dorothy, I'm gonna jump in your direction for this one.

Well this is fated because I'm actually wearing this T-shirt today. My first favorite book and it will never not be my favorite picture book is *Where the Wild Things Are* by Maurice Sendak and I cannot explain why. I love it so much. I love the drawings, I love the Wild Rumpus. I love grumpy little Max. I just love everything about it. Well that's wonderful. Did you happen to see the movie that they did that I did. I saw the movie which I really enjoyed and I saw a movie called *Tell them Anything You Want, Maurice Sendak*, which was fantastic as well. He is a character. Yeah, fantastic. And definitely has been banned. I don't know if this one has ever been banned *In the Night Kitchen*. I think it was banned *Where the Wild Things Are*, was banned at some point in the past because I saw it on a list somewhere, but being too scary I think scary. I love it. Oh actually what I saw it was banned for is for sending the child to bed without dinner to bed without dinner as though that was, but they bring in the food later. Yeah. However um how about you, Alanna?

Well, I had several favorite books, so it's hard to choose one, but I mentioned in our first episode that I chose the name Alanna because I loved that series by Tamora Pierce and um the other series I loved by Tamora Pierce was the Wild Magic series and I loved the main character Daine, I loved the fact that she can talk to animals and become different kinds of animals and um I really enjoyed seeing some of the characters from the earlier books and the third book in that series, *Emperor Mage*, is I think a fantastic book even now and I love to reread all of

Tamora Pierce's books, but especially those two series, whenever I need a comfort book. Her books are so good. I don't think I've read *Wild Magic*. I think you'd enjoy it. It's really good, but I've read a lot of Tamora Pierce.

Um Well for me um if I can jump in, it's um one of my all time favorite books is yet in its a picture book also um and it's *Papa, Please Get the Moon for Me* by Eric Carle. Um And that book I guess I just always had a thing for the moon. I was the little girl who would you know be riding home in the backseat of our car, you know, coming home from grandma and grandpa's house, which you know, a young age, it felt like they lived forever away. It turned out they lived maybe 20 minutes away. But um it was like a big, you know, a big trip when we went to grandma and grandpa's house and I always remember we'd stay too late and we'd come home and I would just be trying to keep my eyes open and looking up at the moon. So I always had this fascination with the moon. But *Papa, Please Get the Moon for Me* is just one of the most magical books and it's a book about love, just the intense love that and trust between a daughter and her father and kind of just that whole, you know, your parents will do anything for you, you're in this case the father um he doesn't want to disappoint his daughter, so when she asks him to get the moon for her, she, you know, she tries to, he tries to climb up and get it and of course by the time he gets up it teaches the phases of the moon and then the moon is has gone full and it's too big. He can't, he can't bring it home. Um and so then they have to wait and until it reappears again and it it just it's just the most lovely story. And um so I just always felt a very strong connection to that book. Um and it's it's one of the first ones that I bought for my kids when they were babies. I couldn't wait to read it to them and they don't love it as much as I do. My kids, my kids do not love *Where the Wild Things Are* the way that I do. It's disappointing when that happens. Yeah. And and Dorothy, that was another one of mine and I have my own personal copy of that book on my personal shelf at home as well. Thinking about getting a tattoo of Max somewhere that sounds like fun. I love that. I actually really, really love that. That's that's a clever, wonderful idea.

All right. As Marian mentioned today, instead of focusing on a particular book, we are discussing current and proposed legislation involving banned books as educators. This issue is incredibly important to us, as we are sure it is to many of you. We will post links to our sources in the show notes, as we always do. But we also recommend that you check out the resources page on our website to find more information about fighting censorship. We will be using the American Library Association's definition of censorship as "This is the suppression of ideas and

information that some individuals, groups, or government officials find objectionable or dangerous.” The ALA also reminds us that only a few categories of speech are not protected by the First Amendment, namely obscenity, child pornography, defamatory speech, false advertising, true threats, and fighting words.

I also thought it would be good to know the ALA’s definition of intellectual freedom, which they actively advocate for and educate people about. Um and that is the rights of library users to read, seek information, and speak freely as guaranteed by the First Amendment. It’s a core value of the library profession and a basic right in our democratic society. Uh, so that’s, you know, an an important concept when you’re talking about whether or not to ban books and censorship takes many forms. We’ve been focusing on the removal of books from libraries and classrooms. But another problem is that many educators feel the need to self-censor in order to avoid being criticized or losing their jobs. So in this case there is no paper trail. A librarian simply decides not to buy a book or to quietly take it off the shelf. And um that’s not great because we want people to have access to all kinds of different materials.

Yeah, for sure. In a 2022 survey, the *School Library Journal* asked librarians, how often do you find yourself weighing the effect of controversial subject matter when making book purchase decisions? 7% said always, 25% said often, and 50% said sometimes. 15% said rarely, and 3% said never. This means that nearly 82% of the librarians surveyed consider the effects at least some of the time, or, I might venture, a lot of the time. Um in terms of reasons for not purchasing books, the journal said sexual content and profanity or vulgar language were the top two responses sexual content and profanity or vulgar language. Um Those were the top two choices at 66 and 43%, respectively. Third on the list was LGBTQIA+ content. The presence of an LGBTQIA+ character or theme in a book led 29% of respondents to decline a purchase. That number spiked to 42% in small towns and rural communities. And if you’ve been listening to our podcasts and are up to date on the ones that we have done on books involving LGBTQIA+ content. Um We’ve mentioned a few of those communities. The titles mentioned multiply. The titles mentioned multiple times by respondents as books they didn’t purchase include as I said, *Gender Queer* by Maia Kobabe, *Drama* by Raina Telgemeier, *A Court of Thorns and Roses* by Sarah J. Mass, *Fighting Words* by Kimberly Brubaker Bradley, *Melissa*, formerly *George*, by Alex Gino, and *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas. As I mentioned. Three of those six books feature an LGBTQIA+ character or story. And what do you make of that, Dorothy and Alanna?

I find it super interesting because in my my library schooling we went over making sure to include books for everyone and making sure to bring in more books on LGBTQIA+ and more books with uh with different people on the covers. You know we wanted books about the black experience and Hispanic experience and the Asian experience. Um So it's just astounding to me that that's a reason that people are rejecting books. Now I was looking at being a librarian in a middle school which I did not become. Therefore I am rogue, right my claim to row roguiness. Um but I have spent some time in libraries. I've never been the person buying books but I have watched kids go and you know right to those books that showed people looking like them. And I have had children asked me about books specifically with LGBTQIA+ themes. My own child would describe their taste in books as I mean give them any LGBTQIA+ combination and they'll pick it up and read it. That's the genre they prefer. So not including it is, I don't know it's just it's kind of surprising to me that in this day and age we're still having that conversation. What do you think Alanna?

Yeah I wasn't shocked by the information since we know that so many of these books are being targeted right now. And I can imagine that if you're the librarian in especially a smaller town where you might be more visible or um they're just it may be harder to be anonymous. Um I could see people being scared for their jobs and their um lives maybe. And so rather than get into fights about certain books with um parents and organizations, I could see why a librarian would make a choice not to purchase something in the first place. But I agree with Dorothy that so many of our students love those books and they're incredibly powerful. So it's a sad statistic but I'm I wasn't surprised by it. What about you?

Well I'm coming at it having been a school librarian um before going rogue myself. And while it is extremely true that at library school um you know all candidates I would like to think are taught at least in accredited library schools, library programs um all library and candidates, you know kind of profess to the um American Library Association's Bill of Rights which guarantees that in selecting materials for the library. Um Lots of things are taken into consideration um including that every single library should have something in it. Or many things in it that represent every single user of that library. Um And if we're honest, you know, no matter where you live, there are certainly people who are identifying or questioning their gender identity or their sexual identity or both. Um and so that's a reality. Um but I also know that having gone to library school and then gotten a job, you know, you leave library school and you have these these grandiose ideas of championing every cause to the death, you know, not quite literally, but you know

obviously it's something we feel very strongly about as librarians and yet your employer who pays your paycheck that pays your rent or your mortgage and the food that goes on your table um and the clothes that go on your back and your children's backs and the gas money and you know, all those things that are necessary to live um may have some different opinions and there are times when you're asked um you know not to do something um not to purchase a type of book or not, you know and you know your job depends on it and um and you know kind of a wanted to go along with what you said to, I feel like there are also times um well just recently I reached out to a friend of mine who works at a public library and um the library had come under some scrutiny over an LGBTQ+ book and this particular library and was literally afraid for their life because the location in which this happened was a very remote location. It's in a state that has um you know concealed carry laws and people get their feathers ruffled so easily. And this particular librarian was terrified that they were going to be made an example. You know take one for the team kind of thing because of the ruckus that ensued from a particular book that she chose to read um at a story time. So it's real. You know the fear is real and um I mean this is one of the reasons why I think it's imperative for us to talk about this in this particular episode and to kind of get the word out there that you know librarians are champions and you know they support each other. They support each other. But it's hard sometimes not to get beaten down by the organization that we work for or the school district that we work for or the you know whatever the particular town that we're we're trying to live in and um and work with. So I think I think we all need to be aware of of what all of these kinds of decisions mean. I mean it's it's one thing to censor ourselves. Um But how does that affect the people that you know, we're trying to serve and you know, and it's it's another thing to be censored, but um I don't know, I just feel like a lot needs to be said about this and people need to speak up and they need to know that this is happening. And I think this is sort of the untold story, is the self censorship is happening so much. Um and it's not a news story, so we'll just put it there.

I also wanted to point out just kudos to any and all librarians out there, whether you've self censored or not, it is um you know, do what you need to do. I don't want any librarians to feel like we are coming down on them because they self censored or cave to, you know, someone telling them to, you know, take a book off the shelves, do what you need to do to you know, to be safe for yourselves. And I think in many cases the right answer is to keep the people whose hearts are in the right place in the jobs so that they can do what they can rather than having them all leave the jobs and be replaced by people who truly embrace maybe some of the ideals that are causing the books to be censored in the first place.

Um I just wanted to say, and that that brings up a whole other um concern is that another thing that is starting to happen in locations where censorship is um raising its ugly head more often than before. Um is to recognize that in some of those school districts and library districts we need to pay pay close attention um to the fact that librarians are professionals who've got a master's degree in library science, they've done a lot of schooling and research to get that degree and they know what they're doing when they select books for a story time and all that being said. There are states and this is happening in education as well, where librarians and teachers um are no longer required to have a certification. And and what that what that is doing is um reducing the profession, reducing the status of the librarian or the teacher from a professional to basically a clerk um who's not able to make decisions, who's not trusted to make decisions and when that starts to happen we're starting to erode the trust that we have in number one our educational system and our certification system. Um but then just in each other in general and our own expertise, um how am I gonna trust a doctor, if a doctor, you know, how if a doctor's degree could just or certification could just be taken away at the whim of, you know, people who have just decided, we don't, we don't think that's necessary anymore. Um you know, so so these are other concerns that pop up in my head.

Those are great points, Marian and Dorothy. I wanted to quickly mention um building on what you said earlier that uh we fully support librarians as you said and all educators and at the end of the episode we're going to give some examples of things that we and everyone else can do to help support the people who are under attack right now and to try to make a difference with everything that's going on.

Great, Alanna, that's a great point. Um because all three of us have been educators and I am wondering if you have ever any, any of you have ever personally felt like you had to um self censor as it were in making a decision about a book to share with the class or um or that sort of thing. It's a great sorry go ahead Dorothy.

Mine usually involves conversations more than books I teach, I teach writing. Um so there's a little bit less deep reading long books, but the conversations that we have, I have often thought to myself, please don't get me fired. You know, and and the kids are bringing stuff up um they are already talking about it, they know um they're writing things about, you know, they're writing gay characters and and when we have the discussions, I'm always just sort of sending up a little

hail mary because I never want to shut a kid down when they have you know important questions or things on their mind. So that's, that's where it usually rears its head.

Yeah. I am also pretty lucky. I haven't had to self censor. I do book talks all the time about books that have LGBTQ+ characters and the students seem excited about those in general. I did have to talk to a couple of students about the response to a book talk one time. But in general, the kids are really excited and really want to read those books. Um, I did have to go before the committee that was making decisions about materials to explain why I wanted to teach *March: Book Three* to eighth graders. And um, that book has several depictions of violence. There's some language, there's a couple of implicit, implicit uh, sexual references and uh, I had to explain how I would teach it and um, why I thought it was important to teach it and the committee was willing to let me do it. And so now our school has those books and I've taught it the last few years, but um, it was a book that easily could have been stopped from being purchased, um, and taught. So I feel pretty lucky. But I do know that things are changing in our school district. And because of a lot of worries, things are getting, uh, much more strict and teachers will have to, um, specify what types of sexual content is in books and things like that. So, um, I, I think I had a very lucky time choosing books and I think the field is changing at the moment.

Yeah, that's really sad to hear that. That's the trend that it's that we're going towards. And it's, it's interesting because for me, um, when I moved from, um, an elementary school library to a middle school library in the same district, um, it was, it was sort of in the middle of the um, the interview process. I had had a very good interview and then one of the administrators wanted to come over and see me in action in the elementary school library, um, is sort of their final, I guess approval of hiring me. And so, you know, it was, it was fine. Um, I ended up getting hired, but I remember having a sit down conversation with the administrator after she had observed me with a class and I asked her, she asked me if I had any questions about the middle school. And so of course I asked her if she felt that there were a number of students who might be questioning their sexuality. Um, and her answer was, oh, no, not not at our school. I remember that being such an eye opening moment for me and I made a decision at that point, Number one, I knew that she was wrong and just uninformed, um, because I know kids and um, and I know my job and so I had to make a decision when I joined the staff officially the following um fall. And I was looking at the kinds of books that I wanted to order. And at at that point, you know, that was a time when the first books about transgender were coming were starting to be

published. Um memoirs of people who had undergone a transition. And I just remember thinking, oh I know that there are students who will benefit from this. I couldn't tell you exactly who they were. I just knew that they were there in the school. And so I made a point of bringing in books however I could. Um so if I felt uncomfortable ordering a book, which I don't think I ever felt particularly uncomfortable ordering anything that was LGBTQ+. But what I did do is I went to a lot of library conferences and I would pick up um books there and bring them back and just sort of hand them off to students as they would in a clandestine conversation, explain that they were looking for something a little different. Um and I can't tell you what those conversations ever entail. It's just a knowing that happens between a teacher and a student or a librarian and a student or sometimes a parent and their child. Um, but it was always appreciated. I will say that and it has always been my mission to get books into the hands of people who need them. Um, and yet at the same time, I always had that voice in the back of my head that basically was saying, ask Forgiveness later. Don't ask permission first. Yeah. And that sort of came and had the timing been different, it could have really been a problem. It could have. Yeah. And um, yeah, unfortunately.

Current legislation, stuff already on the books, we're gonna start our exploration there. Um, So most of the laws are about to describe were passed in 2022. The following information is from an article by Kelly Jensen, which was published on Book Riot on August 26, 2022. Uh, Florida passed the Parental Rights and Education Act, also known as the Don't Say Gay Act in March 2022. This law made it illegal for public schools to discuss sexual orientation or gender identity from kindergarten through third grade or in any manner against state standards in all grades. It prohibits public schools from maintaining the confidentiality of the disclosure of a student's orientation or identity or keeping their health records from their parents. Um, about 20 other states have introduced similar bills and I just might add here that some of these children will have parents who are gay. So regardless of their, whatever they grow up to become, um, they are going to be made targets of bullying. This is just my two cents. Uh, they are going to wonder what's wrong with their own families. Um, I'm not saying there needs to be any curriculum, but if nobody can even mention it, you know, that's maybe not best for all of their students. Alright, so around the same time Florida passed house Bill 1,467, which allows parents to review books and materials used in schools. Uh, elementary schools are required to publish lists of materials in libraries and on reading lists. Additionally, books can be removed from libraries for not aligning to state academic standards. Now, side note, most schools that I've heard of will always publish a list of materials on reading lists and will always give alternative books for parents who

object. Yes, but that part, that part is not new. Right? But we don't publish every single book in our classroom libraries, for example. No, no, we definitely do not. So yeah, we only publish a list of the books we are likely going to be reading during the year, Right? It's for the books that are being studied that we would normally see that list. So they they put something that we already do next to something that's ridiculous. And it sounds less ridiculous that way. You know, that's how a lot of these things are written.

Can I just jump into because also, also teachers are leaving the profession right now because of the continued amount of work that ends up on a teacher's shoulders, over and above what has already been on the teacher's shoulders over and above what has already been on the teacher's shoulders. And every social problem has resulted in being one more thing that teachers, particularly in elementary school, are required to teach the kids such as manners and hygiene and nutritious eating and how to get along with people who think differently than you etcetera etcetera. And now, as if every teacher has plenty of free time, they're going to be asked to publish their entire class list of books. Wow, that's just a tremendous burden. And in some places required to have read them all so that they know whether there's any of these objectionable materials in them and presumably take the objectionable ones off the shelf.

But I'm going to read Ron DeSantis's quote: "What ends up being in that classroom or in that library ... the parent doesn't necessarily have control. But at that point, once it's there or going to be proposed, you have the opportunity to review. There's procedures that will be in place. And, if it violates state standards, if it's not consistent with what we've set out under Florida law, then the parent can prevail." which seems pretty vague to me. Yeah, I was thinking, what does that even mean? Well it's prevail in preventing their children from reading it, I guess, right.

And the other children too, it's, you know, it seems like parental rights is a really popular campaign issue at the moment in a lot of places and it may help them to get elected or re-elected. And so I think they're going to continue pushing those ideas.

Oh, I don't disagree with you, Alanna, but I'm a parent. Dorothy is a parent. Um What about our parental rights? Oh, I know I want. Well they don't think your ideas are good ones so they would not agree with you.

I mean, you know, I mean we need we need a parental rights movements. That's Pro-LGBT, which maybe is out there.

Yeah, I've read a couple of news articles about parents forming such groups to counter efforts to remove books. So they are out there, but they are either not as well funded or not as well publicized. So I think some people are forming them, but they could definitely use more help.

But even if it's not a movement and we're going to get to this at the end, but you know, show up at the meetings, make your voice heard. If you're one of those parents show up at the school board meeting, show up at the library board meeting.

Exactly. And don't just show up for your issue. Show up for each other because every individual should be seen and heard and Their perspective considered every single one. And then let's, you know, have a civil discourse about all the different perspectives and come up with somehow a compromise where we're not hurting people who identify a certain way we are giving parents rights not to have their personal child read something if that's the direction they want to go. But what isn't right for my child might be just the thing that will save another child's life. Um and so I think we need to to really um broaden our horizons a little bit.

Would you like to tell us about a few more states that have passed laws recently? Um we all know Florida's, as Dorothy mentioned, is probably the most famous example, but it's hardly the only state. And um Missouri passed a law in 2022 that said all books deemed sexually explicit are illegal in public and private schools. If someone makes them available, they will be charged with a class A misdemeanor, which could lead to a year in jail and a \$2,000 fine. So this is a very frightening precedent as a librarian slash educator slash librarian, which is, I mean, I could go to jail for putting a book in front of a child that is deemed to have content that is sexually explicit by some unknown standard of someone saying it's sexually explicit. And what I understand is that there are no guidelines specifically. It's meant to be vague because it's subject to interpretation. And so what ends up happening is, you know, it's easier for someone to claim that it's sexually explicit, send an educator or a librarian to jail, have them pay the \$2,000 fine. And then the librarian or educator can defend themselves by, you know, appealing to a court, which of course then means a long time embattled and again, is remains subject to someone's interpretation of what that means. Um, so that's, that's a terrifying precedent that has now already come down. Um in Oklahoma, House bill 1775, bans critical race theory from

classrooms and has been used not only to remove books by and about people of color from classrooms, but also creating loopholes for politicians to seek the removal of queer books as well. Um, so that's disturbing. I know the Anti-Defamation League is uh, pretty aware of that. And um, and they're, they're trying to make some cases as well, but, but they need our help. Um, and then one more in Utah. Not that there's only one more, but one more that I like to highlight. Um, in Utah, house Bill 374 known as sensitive materials in schools. Bill prohibits sensitive materials in schools. So this bill allows the state Attorney General to instruct education workers about what is and is not sensitive material and provides a mechanism for parents to file former complaints about school material. The Attorney General's guidance on this bill has been updated twice already. And the most recent guidelines tell districts that they need to remove material deemed sexually explicit and, or pornography immediately, which again, um, that's such a slippery slope because the biggest issue with a lot of this legislation besides the fact that it passed is that the guidelines are not clear. Um, and we're relying on someone's opinion as to what is appropriate to for us or for our children. They don't even know me or my Children. So how can they make that decision for me and for everyone else? So, um, I throw that out for the good of the cause and um, friends, What do you think?

Yeah, I completely agree Marian when the language is so vague, it's easy for people to do whatever they want with it. And I'm sure we will see much more of that happening as this year continues since these, a couple of these bills just went into place the school year. So it will be um, interesting and I'm sure very sad to see what happens.

I did see a list. I think it was Virginia that said, and I'm going from memory here. It was trying to be specific about what to look for and it starts off with, you know, bestiality, which I think most people could probably agree, you know, doesn't need to be in the library, but it starts off with the strong stuff like that and then ends up with um arousal. I'm like just arousal. Like that's every romance, uh, leaning book of any kind like to even touch on the fact that you are attracted to a person seems excessive. Even for the most extreme, it certainly does.

And it just feels like it's such a puritanical. Were these people ever teenagers? Right? And it feels very puritanical. Yeah.

And I mean, personal feelings aside, you would think that school systems would, would prize the opinions of psychologists on the matter as well, you know that what is what is good for

children to know about at a certain age of what is detrimental for them to not know ought to be part of the conversation. Yeah, certainly. So more legislation are coming, right?

We wanted to also mention some proposed pieces of legislation as you've heard a bunch of laws have been passed in the last year and so many more are in the works right now. There are lots of bills that are being proposed in different states. And the following information once again comes from an article by Kelly Jensen on Book Riot, this time from January 20, 2023. So we decided to focus on a few bills that are in the works and uh just to give you a sense of the types of things that are being proposed, but you can find a much longer list on their website. So, Marian, do you wanna start with Indiana for us?

Absolutely. And I also want to add on, you know that these articles are referenced in our notes, as Alanma said at the beginning. So feel free to look these up as your starting point when you want to do your own research. And as well, you should do your own research um and find out what's going on out there that we need to be aware of. Um So, Indiana currently has um is I guess uh considering SB12 in the current legislative session. Um and a little context. Last year, Indiana policymakers tried to create a bill that would allow prosecution of anyone giving harmful material to minors this year. They're reviving the bill. And, in addition, it would also outlaw drag performances and book displays. Um and it appears that at least one community in Indiana plans to vote on supporting the resolution despite the fact their own public library does not agree with it. The book that reignited, this is a book called *It's Perfectly Normal*, which is a book for children about sex. Um So that's that's what's going on in Indiana. And uh you know, it could be coming to your state to pay attention.

And do you know if this bill would be similar to Missouri's and that you could go to jail and be fined for um providing this information in a library or in a school? Well, certainly, yes, um in fact that is part of it. Um you know, and it's it is the legislative session there obviously meeting to talk about lots of things. So just like in any legislative session, what's proposed and what may end up getting past could change a lot, or it might be uh might go unpassed as it did in the previous legislative session. But the fact that it's back up again definitely frightens me. And I do know for a fact that in Indiana um holding librarians and educators uh criminally responsible is definitely what is um being considered and they want to put that powerful language in there. People want to hold somebody responsible. Um and again, you know, the vagueness of what is considered harmful, harmful material to minors. That's a tough one. I mean, who who gets to decide that

and how will those guidelines be shared? And what if you don't agree with those guidelines? Um and and as a parent, would you have the right to give your own children? Those quote unquote harmful materials? Right. And and that's, you know, thank you for bringing that back up Dorothy because that's one of my my biggest concerns here is that all of these bills that are either have either been passed in the states that we just talked about or that are now pending in states. These are um these are all being shrouded as parental rights type bills. But yeah, and it's just so soon going to turn into a way to take people who don't agree with you, their children away from them. And that's exactly it. And people don't understand that they think, oh, you know, this is giving me more rights. But there seems to be this trend in the country on many issues that right now what I want is my rights. And even if it steps on your rights, it's still my right. You know, like there's just this, it becomes my right to protect your children, right. There's no acknowledgment of the fact that we are a population of people with many differing backgrounds and experiences and perspectives and that we can have a civil discourse and learn to live with each other and get along. But with laws like these on the books, um, that's not gonna happen. That's pitting us more and more against each other and gradually eroding every right that we have hm strong words.

Shall we move to North Dakota? I don't want to live in North Dakota. No offense North Dakota and I'm sure it's beautiful. But they are considering a bill in the house and Senate. Any books featuring gay or trans humans would be banned in public libraries under HB 1205. What is especially disturbing about this one is the level of detail going into what is or is not allowed on shelves in public libraries. So just to repeat any book about sexual or gender identity would be illegal in public libraries. Shall we hearken back to our freedom of information as a basic right of Americans to be able to access information and gay and trans people. But the bill proposed in North Dakota would strip away protections that allow educational institutions, schools, libraries, museums, etcetera to bypass that law. So it's just very, very scary thing.

It really is. And I mean, just think about the number of books that have anything to deal with gender or something sexual and think about what it would be like not to see any of those when you're growing up. I mean, I know that kids can still probably find some information on the internet if books are not easily available to them, but it's oh they're going to read. Yeah, but I think you are, as as you said earlier, harming them so much if you do not allow these books to be available.

Oh and we've said it before and we say it, you know, pretty much weekly. But the books that are in particularly the school libraries put these ideas in context that help people grappling with questioning about who they are in a perspective that they can understand if all they're reading is bad fanfic written by middle schoolers. You know, it's it's not going to put it in any kind of a context that makes any kind of sense. And books are written to inform, to explain things that are difficult in life. And if people are reading books, that's a good thing because that means they're reading different perspectives and they're going to possibly discuss with someone.

Um what is in the books, it's it's not having access to information to only hearing one party line that is very, very dangerous. We've seen this happen in recent history during World War Two. Um, there was, you know, a lot of book burning and limited information um, by the powers that be during World War Two and that led to obviously awful conditions for people. Is this what we want? Is this what we want to the direction we want our our freedom loving country to go to where one party or one mindset is being celebrated and limiting access to anything else. I don't know, it's it's it's a thought worth. We're thinking about definitely.

So in Nebraska, they are considering a bill called LB 374 which would make it easier to file book challenges and banned books. And it would allow parents to object to any book that harmed their firmly held beliefs, values, or principles and to withdraw their children from those classes or activities. So, um, you know, firmly held beliefs, values or principles is quite vague. And so if you don't believe that queer people or black people deserve to be represented. Um, it sounds like a parent could object to their child being educated about other people. And the bill also does not allow educators to talk about race or racism. So this is another example of a critical race theory ban. And I think we could talk for a very long time about that critical race theory piece and we probably don't have time to go into it in depth. But um, you know, it just seems to be an excuse for uh white people to remove anything that makes them uncomfortable and discussing a real history of race and racism in this country makes them uncomfortable. So we see lots of states trying to remove anything they consider to be critical race theory, which just means that our children will have a very skewed understanding of our country's history. And it's incredibly disturbing.

It brings me back to something that I, that my daughter said to me at one point when we were traveling abroad and she said she, she was being very critical of some decisions made by, um, by America and this is a few years ago and I said to her, um, well that sounds, that sounds

pretty critical and her response to me was mom, I love my country. I love everything about the United States of America. And I love that I have the ability to love it so much that I can be critical when I see it doing things that I question. And I think that that just jumped into my head here too because I'm seeing these things happening here. And I'm thinking we have the freedom to do this podcast. Our listeners have the freedom to listen to this podcast and to make, to draw their own conclusions and to do their own research and that's what we hope everyone does. But I think the most important piece here is no one is ever all the way right. As much as we like to think that we are um and everyone hears things here and there. But I just can't emphasize enough how important the dialogue is in terms of bringing us closer to an understanding of what is really important and what is true. Um and you know challenging our long held beliefs um just makes us that much smarter and um you know and making ourselves smarter makes our country better. So I just feel like that's worth pointing out at this point.

Well this is just a small selection of the states that have passed or are considering laws that would affect what materials people can access. And so we wanted to give some examples of ways to fight censorship, ways that we and you can get involved. And the ALA, the American Library Association, provides several suggestions for ways to fight censorship on their website. For example, they suggest that you oppose legislation in your state that would censor materials, programs, or curriculum. And to do that you can engage respectfully with your elected officials by phone, email, and/or social media. So the more that people raise objections to these types of bills, the more likely it is that our representatives won't end up voting for them so we can definitely play a role in stopping more legislation from being passed. Yeah definitely. And Dorothy, do you want to give us some more suggestions?

Sure, the ALA provides other suggestions for ways to support library workers, including follow news in your community, show up for school or library board meetings, like we said before in support of parents' right to restrict their own child's, but not all readers' materials, educate your friends and families, write an op-ed or letter to the editor in your local newspaper, and join the Freedom to Read foundation. We suggest that you check out the link in our show notes or on our resources page for these and other ideas.

Yeah. And I think these are really, really important, um, things to consider. Um, I feel like we all get so entrenched in our day to day lives, you know, getting a healthy meal on the table, getting to work on time, getting our laundry done, getting our exercise in, you know, maybe seeing a

friend once in a while, um, trying to just live our lives, that it's really easy to become complacent. Um, and I think, you know, I think my big takeaway from all of this discussion is we can never be complacent because as soon as we are, that's when we start to lose our freedoms. Um, and I know that that was a big takeaway that I had from reading about and learning about all of this legislation. Um, the article in question. Uh, the writer indicated something along the lines of you know, a lot of people look at the states that we're discussing specifically and say, oh those are red states, you know, it was gonna happen. And I think that's a really dangerous attitude to take. And the author of the article said that as well that we shouldn't look at it that way. We should fight censorship wherever and whenever we see it happening. Um even if it's not your issue or maybe especially if it's not your issue because they're not coming after you today, but they might be coming after you or your liberties the next time. So um I can't emphasize enough how important it is to get out there, do your research. We've tried to give you a head start with this podcast. Um but there's a lot that you can do. There's a lot that one person can do. Um and we can also, we can also encourage our our friends and colleagues to do the same and keep reading banned books and keep talking about banned books with us on our podcast.

Well, thank you both, as always. It's always a blast to discuss things with you through our podcast. Um and we're gonna go ahead and wrap up this particular bonus episode. If you would like to leave us a question or a comment, again, please visit us through [www.theroguelibrarians.com](http://www.theroguelibrarians.com) or follow us on Instagram or Facebook @roguelibrarianspod or on Twitter @RLibrarians. If you are enjoying the podcast, please subscribe on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Stitcher, or wherever you find your podcast. Thank you, as always, to Chris and to Lizzie–Chris for the music, Lizzie for the audio editing. We could not have done this podcast without them. And of course thank you to all of you for reading with us. Um Finally, we wanted to give a big shout out to our first patron, Briian Feeney. We really appreciate his support, and we encourage all of you to support our podcast on Patreon as well. You'll receive great perks like personalized book recommendations and audio content such as bloopers. Trust me, there are many. And we'll end it with Brian's words today: "Books are meant to be read." Bye.

\*Please excuse the typos and grammatical errors.