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Free Speech Groups Denounce Boycott of Oregon Bookstore Over ‘Offensive’ Display

New York, NY, September 12 2016 - The National Coalition Against Censorship (NCAC) is leading a coalition of 6 free speech organizations in denouncing an Oregon theater group’s boycott of a nearby bookstore over a book display deemed racially offensive.

The Oregon Shakespeare Festival (OSF) announced it would no longer patronize Shakespeare Books & Antiques after its owner, Judi Honoré, refused to remove a copy of *Little Black Sambo* from the store’s long-standing display about book censorship. Festival actors complained that the book’s cover, containing a racially stereotyped depiction of Sambo, was “hurtful and offensive.” Honoré has since announced the closure of the fourteen-year old-bookstore, citing plummeting sales and the stress of her exchange with the OSF.

NCAC’s statement highlights the “vast array” of materials aside from *Little Black Sambo* in the banned book display, intended to “prompt spontaneous discussions about censorship and its implications for a diverse democratic community.” In boycotting the store, the statement reads, OSF fails a fundamental free speech principle, “that the response to noxious ideas is more speech, not enforced silence.” Instead of a boycott, the groups would have encouraged “a public discussion about the reasons for the display, the reactions it elicited, and the role freedom of speech has played in the fight for racial justice and social change.”

The statement is signed by the Comic Books Legal Defense Fund, Authors Guild, the Association for American Publishers, American Booksellers for Free Expression, Dramatists Guild and the American Association of University Presses.

"We are concerned whenever a boycott, which is protected First Amendment activity, is designed to silence the ability of other to speak and be heard." said NCAC Executive Director Joan Bertin. "For four years, the shop's informative display has educated the Ashland community about book censorship and conveyed a message that should have been enthusiastically embraced by a group named after a much censored playwright."

[READ THE FULL STATEMENT](#)

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The National Coalition Against Censorship (NCAC) is an alliance of 50 national non-profit organizations dedicated to defending freedom of thought, inquiry and expression.

