

MISSION: READ FREELY

The Kids' Right to Read Project (KRRP) is an initiative of the National Coalition Against Censorship. It was co-founded with the American Booksellers for Free Expression and is supported by the Association of American Booksellers and Comic Book Legal Defense Fund.

Defending the Right to Read Toni Morrison

Although Toni Morrison is widely considered one of the greatest American authors—she has been honored with a Nobel and Pulitzer Prize—her works are frequently challenged and sometimes banned.

In April 2016, KRRP intervened with the president and trustees of Northville Public Schools, Michigan, advising them to reject parental demands to remove Morrison's acclaimed novel *The Bluest Eye* from an AP English Literature class.

The controversy began when parents complained that the book's sexual references made it a type of "porn." As is typical of such cases, the complaints entirely ignored the value of the book as a whole. KRRP argued that "the novel is primarily concerned not with sexuality but with the problems ensuing from differences in class and race—an especially appropriate theme in the high school classroom."

KRRP also noted the particular importance of reading books like *The Bluest Eye* in AP classrooms. In such college-level courses, students need to be introduced to authors of Morrison's stature. Schools that fail to do so put their students at an educational disadvantage.

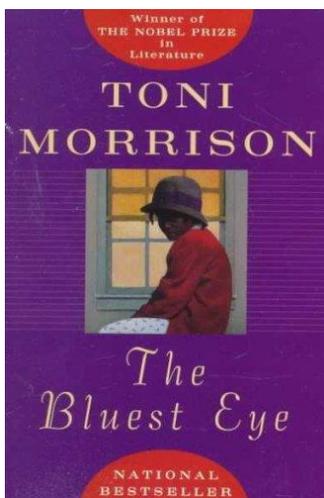
Following KRRP's intervention, Northville Public Schools decided to retain *The Bluest Eye* in its AP English Literature classes.

The Bluest Eye was not Morrison's only work to arouse controversy in 2016. In March, NCAC

wrote a letter to Virginia Governor Terry McAuliffe, urging him to veto a bill requiring school districts to notify parents of "sexually explicit content" in books. The bill became known as the "Beloved Bill" as it was instigated by parents opposed to the teaching of Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved*. All they saw in this heart-wrenching novel about slavery was sexual content.

NCAC's letter condemned the bill, as labeling books "sexually explicit" casts a negative light on the material regardless of its artistic and educational value. If signed into law, the bill would have been likely to lead teachers to avoid selecting a wide range of books that refer to sexuality. Fortunately, Gov. McAuliffe vetoed the bill.

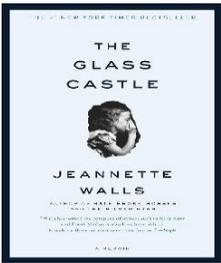
Censorship efforts are disproportionately aimed at works by African-American and other minority authors. In addition to Morrison, challenges have regularly targeted Richard Wright, Maya Angelou, and Sherman Alexie among many others.



Help fight censorship! Consider supporting KRRP at ncac.org/donate.

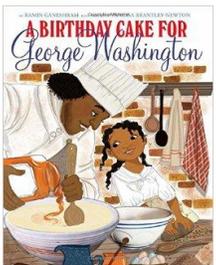
2016 KRRP OPERATIONS

Operation Protect the Glass Castle...West Allegheny, Pennsylvania



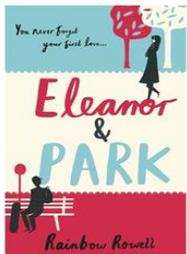
KRRP sent a letter in response to a Pennsylvania school's decision to remove Jeannette Walls' *The Glass Castle* from a reading list due to its descriptions of sexual abuse and drug addiction. Although the KRRP letter did not receive a response from the school, a student was inspired to continue the fight; she put pressure on her school by creating a petition in defense of *The Glass Castle* and gathering over two hundred student signatures. Renae Roscart presented her petition to the board and argued that many students faced real-life struggles with the issues described in the book.

Operation Let Them Eat Cake...Nationwide



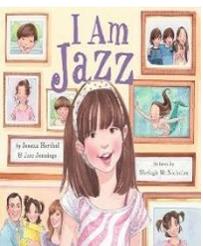
Scholastic Press recalled *A Birthday Cake for George Washington* following complaints that the book's depictions of smiling slaves obscured the evils of slavery. Scholastic's act, while well within the rights of the private publisher, deprived readers of the chance to evaluate the book and participate in thought-provoking discussion about discomforting aspects of President Washington's legacy. NCAC condemned Scholastic's decision, noting that it would have a chilling effect that would lead authors, illustrators, and publishers to hesitate in taking on racially sensitive topics.

Operation Combat Chesterfield's Censors...Chesterfield, VA



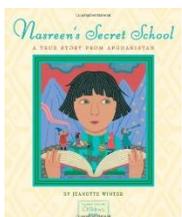
Chesterfield parents complained that *Eleanor and Park*, *Tyrell*, and *Dope Sick*, which contain references to domestic abuse, violence, and sexuality, were inappropriate for school libraries. The parents also demanded that the school district assign labels and ratings to potentially objectionable books. KRRP defended the award-winning titles and noted that ratings prompt teachers to avoid selecting valuable but potentially controversial books for classroom instruction. The books will remain in the library.

Operation Read About Jazz...Mount Horeb, WI



A Wisconsin school cancelled a reading of *I Am Jazz*, the autobiography of a transgender child, after Liberty Counsel, a "Christian ministry", threatened a lawsuit. LC claimed that the reading violated the rights of parents who felt that the book's message violated their religious beliefs. NCAC's letter to the Mount Horeb School District noted that the First Amendment does not let parents dictate what public schools may or may not teach to their children. NCAC supported a nationwide campaign of community readings of the book organized by the Human Rights Campaign.

Operation Resist Islamophobia...Duval County, Florida



Jeanette Winter's acclaimed books *The Librarian of Basra* and *Nasreen's Secret School* tell stories about a librarian who saved books in wartime and girls' education in Taliban-controlled Afghanistan. Parents complained that the books sought to indoctrinate children in Islam. KRRP's letter pointed out that education about other faiths and cultures is vital to a thorough education and noted that the books in no way favored Islam over other religions. The school ultimately decided to keep the books but let parents request alternative assignments.