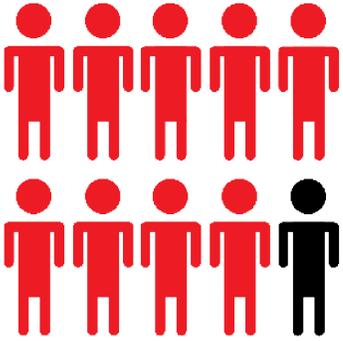


DEFEND LGBTQ STORIES



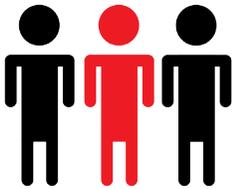
NATIONAL 
COALITION 
AGAINST 
CENSORSHIP 

THE NUMBERS



9 out of 10 LGBTQ students regularly confront teasing, bullying and sometimes violence.

LGBTQ students are **140x** more likely than heterosexual students to miss school due to safety concerns.



1 out of 3 LGBTQ youth attempt suicide or have suicidal thoughts. Youth in schools with pro-LGBTQ policies report fewer thoughts of suicide.

Source: Center for Disease Control, (2015 Youth Risk Behavior Survey)

WHY ARE LGBTQ BOOKS IMPORTANT?

The freedom to read stories about people of diverse sexual and gender identities can validate and empower all youth, especially those who may identify as LGBTQ. When LGBTQ youth do not see themselves represented in the stories or art around them, they can internalize negative messages about the value of their own personal stories. LGBTQ representation in literature can also promote tolerance and acceptance of all human difference, including sexual and gender identities.



WHY ARE LGBTQ BOOKS RESTRICTED?

Usually, people challenge books based on personal opinions and values. Intolerance of LGBTQ stories reflects a bias towards cis-gendered and heterosexual perspectives and against more nuanced understandings of family and gender roles.

In Alabama, Arizona, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma, South Carolina and Texas, anti-gay laws governing school curriculums prohibit “promoting homosexuality” or presenting same-sex issues in a positive light. These laws, which are probably unconstitutional, were enacted in the late 1980s during a wave of homophobic sex education reforms in response to the AIDS crisis.

“As a teacher, I hope to help future generations of kids be stronger, wiser, more compassionate, more loving, and more accepting than my generation... I can’t change the world. I can’t rid the world of hatred and bigotry. But I can tell, live, and write and teach about my truth, and I can encourage others to do the same.”

- Rob Sanders, author of PRIDE: The Story of Harvey Milk



REASON 1: RELIGION

Although some opponents of LGBTQ-themed books argue the importance of “traditional family values”, many openly cite their religious beliefs to justify excluding books about LGBTQ people. Some claim that LGBTQ books are “immoral” or “sinful.” Some even argue that LGBTQ books themselves promote a religious viewpoint, and that offering them in public institutions violates the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment. In 2018, religious leaders in Texas sued the Houston Public Library for violating their First Amendment right to religious freedom by hosting an LGBTQ-themed reading event for kids. They failed.

The same First Amendment that guarantees religious freedom for individuals also prevents public officials from making decisions based on religious beliefs. It protects our right to read and receive information, regardless of viewpoint or ideology.

REASON 2: SEX

Another common challenge to LGBTQ-themed books conflates sexual identity with sex.

Advocates of censorship often complain that even referring to sexual preference—or acknowledging the existence of more than just heterosexuality—is sexually suggestive. Some challengers even argue that a picture book showing two male penguins adopting an egg together is a sexually inappropriate story for children. This can lead to youth being denied access to important lessons about acceptance of meaningful expressions of love and intimacy.

5 WAYS YOU CAN DEFEND LGBTQ BOOKS

1. TALK LIKE AN ALLY, WALK LIKE AN ALLY

The most effective way to change attitudes towards LGBTQ books is to destigmatize LGBTQ experiences through our everyday speech and actions, talking openly and kindly about LGBTQ issues and demonstrating inclusivity.

Start a conversation on social media and share your views on the educational importance of LGBTQ stories.

If a book is challenged in your community, work with your school or library to organize a forum where concerned community members can be heard. Amplify voices that might be silenced or marginalized, especially those of students and LGBTQ community members.

2. PROTEST AND PETITION

Real change requires action!

Write directly to school or library officials to defend the value of challenged books. Start an online petition to return any books that have been removed or restricted because of their viewpoint.

Attend school board meetings where book challenges are discussed and invite others to join you with signs that advocate for freedom of expression. Talk to any reporters who may be present. Write a letter to the editor of your local paper.



5 WAYS YOU CAN DEFEND LGBTQ BOOKS

3. LOOK UP AND STRENGTHEN YOUR SCHOOL POLICIES

Does your school district protect LGBTQ expression? Check your district or school board's website for formal procedures on the selection and review of controversial materials. The best policies prevent officials from removing or restricting content without committee review of its educational merits. A book should never be restricted simply because someone dislikes it or considers it "inappropriate."

4. REACH OUT TO NCAC

You don't have to fight censorship alone!

NCAC's Kids' Right to Read Project defends students' First Amendment rights to access literature. We provide resources and guidance to anyone confronting censorship, including teachers and librarians at risk of job loss for choosing LGBTQ books.

Contact us for help. Email krrp@ncac.org or visit www.ncac.org/report to report any incidents.

5. READ FREELY...AND SHARE!

Reading banned and challenged books is an act of resistance. Start a book club in your community and engage your local library. Need book recommendations? Visit NCAC's Read with Pride Library for a list of great LGBTQ reads to explore and share with others: www.ncac.org/readlgbtq



#UNCENSOREDPRIDE

Share your favorite LGBTQ titles and covers with us on social media with #UncensoredPride!

“Many [people] feel it’s inappropriate to talk about homosexuality because they think they’re talking about sex... A 4-year old doesn’t have the same associations between homosexuality and sex. They take things very literally. You can tell them sometimes a man falls in love with another man and they start a family. That’s all you need to say.”

– Justin Richardson, author of *And Tango Makes Three*

REPORT CENSORSHIP

One of the best ways to fight censorship is to call it out as it happens.



@ncacensorship



@ncacorg



ncac@ncac.org



NATIONAL 
COALITION 
AGAINST 
CENSORSHIP 

NCAC.ORG