



# Book Challenges and Bans in the United States

By Haley Baker

# Introduction

- Parents need to be involved in what materials their children are consuming.
- The American Library Association has recorded, "...the highest number of attempted book bans since ALA began compiling data about censorship in libraries more than 20 years ago. The unparalleled number of reported book challenges in 2022 nearly doubles the 729 book challenges reported in 2021."
- Reporting is voluntary.

# Current State

- Traditionally conservative areas of the country.
- Access and representation is dependent on location and belonging to majority.
- Small groups are responsible for most of the bans.
- Don't reflect the views of the majority.
- Polls show 70% of people oppose bans.
- Bans continue....

# Scare Tactics

- Processes are being sidestepped.
- Claims of obscenity, harm to minors, pornographic content, etc.
- PEN America Report 2023
- Legal tests for obscenity require holistic evaluation.
- Threats and violence
- This is not parents curating materials for their children.



# Groups Seeking Bans

- Fifty groups involved in pushing for book bans across the country operating at the national, state, or local level. Eight have local or regional chapters that, between them, number at least three hundred.
- Many operate predominantly through social media.
- These parent and community groups have played a role in at least half of the book bans enacted across the country during the 2021–22 school year.

# Groups Affected

- These groups are targeting books for young people based on their own personal traditions, morals, religious ideologies, and political views.
- Representation matters.
- Some communities only access is public libraries and schools.

# Constitutionality of Book Bans

- Public libraries mission is to support First Amendment.
- Censorship is not illegal unless...
- Censorship vs. legitimate curation

# Combating Book Bans

- Organizations like Banned Books Week, PEN America, and Foundation 451
- How to Fight Book Bans and Challenges: An Anti-Censorship Tool Kit by Kelley Jensen
- Both sides of the argument are needed.



# National Digital Public Library

- My proposal to promote access to books is to create a free national public digital library.
- Curated by qualified librarians.
- Broad access
- Rights granted to minors differ by jurisdiction.
- Parental consent required.

Questions  
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Thank you

