

Oppression under censorship

Business



You cannot read this introduction sentence, because a higher authority has deemed it objectionable. Such a claim sounds absurd. The freedom of expressing your ideas, through speech and print, is so important, it's the first liberty guaranteed to us in the United States Bill of Rights.

However, students everywhere are aware how flexible the authorities deem the right to be. Everyday in schools throughout the United States, books containing 'questionable content' are banned, and the liberty of choosing your ideas squanders. Most everyone has heard of the claims against Mark Twain's Huckleberry Finn. The racism of the novel, as well as the recurring use of racial slurs have resulted in banning and challenges of the story in schools all over the country. Other books follow: The Golden Compass for 'anti-Christian sentiments' and cultural use of alcohol, The Giver for euthanasia, Harry Potter for its portrayal of 'positive witchcraft,' Stephen Chbosky's wildly popular Perks of Being a Wallflower for its sexual content.

Most of the complaints brought against these books are waged by parents, though librarians are common culprits as well. But really, why should you care? Maybe you aren't involved with your school's book club, or maybe you don't particularly like any of the novels listed above. No siree, censorship does not affect you. And that's where you would be wrong. Whether or not you enjoy school, it is a simple fact that when you are sat down everyday to learn, you are being told what to believe.

When school censors works — either a published author's or your own — you are being told what you can't believe. You are having the right of choosing your beliefs taken away from you, simply because some adult with too much

free time and morals you may not agree with chooses to deny that their beliefs are not the only beliefs. “ Holden Caulfield, ” the well meaning adult writes the school, “ uses blasphemous profanity!” The adult does not realize s/he has spelled ‘ blasphemous’ incorrectly, because his/her parents never allowed him/her to look at ‘ blasphemous material.’ “ This is unacceptable!” the adult continues, “ No child should be allowed to read the adventures of an adolescent who cannot watch his mouth!” For some reason, the school board agrees. Such a facet of life should never be acknowledged! Nobody of any importance swears, ever! Why, if we learn anything from The Catcher in The Rye, it should be from Holden’s younger sister. Such a sweet thing.

Never swears at all. Everybody is that exact paradigm of innocence! Thus, that kid who swears and may identify with Caulfield’s sense of mental austerity, the kid who might have learned from Salinger that being lost is ok, well, he isn’t allowed to read The Catcher in the Rye, because at 17 years old, we all know he can’t handle the word ‘ damn.’ His thinking is regulated by someone he may never meet, whose morals he does not live by. One of the reasons Nazi Germany was so successful as a regime was its systematic purging of ideas the government deemed ‘ unacceptable,’ often in the form of book burnings (fun fact: the word for the burning of books is ‘ libricide’). For a society to function in the most effective manner possible, freedom of thought must be allowed.

A society where thought is enslaved will stumble along, where thought is encouraged, will thrive. Not only does censorship hurt: censorship oppresses. What can you do to help? For one, if you know of a school library that has banned a book on the grounds of it ‘ not agreeing with the school’s beliefs,’ <https://assignbuster.com/oppression-under-censorship/>

that is a violation of your First Amendment Right. If for other reasons, launch a (peaceful) protest with well thought out arguments. Write letters to your school board explaining why censorship is dangerous, and why books shouldn't be banned. When John Green, author of *Looking for Alaska*, found out that a school district in Tennessee banned his book, he harnessed the power of social media to release a backlash: he called for his fans to write sincere but strong letters to the school district, and hundreds, if not thousands, of people complied.

As far as organizations go, you can support the American Library Association, also known as the ALA. The ALA runs a sector called The Office of Intellectual Freedom and maintains a website called Banned and Challenged Books. The website contains statistics about banned books and censorship, by year and by complaint. It also spreads news about local events to speak out against banned and challenged books, and sells merchandise on 'Banned and Challenged Books Week' to raise awareness about censorship. We are teenagers.

In the twilight zone where we are treated as children but expected to behave as adults, we need to be allowed choice. Censorship kills freedom of thought, but in today's world, where so few have a legitimate opinion on anything, our thoughts must be ours to choose. Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.