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My essay deals with banning the novel *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* from highschool reading lists, and why this behavior is inappropriate. Specifically, it addresses the following question: Columnist James J. Kilpatrick wrote that *Huck Finn* is “ a fun book for white boys to read...

For black children, I have come to realize, it is a brutal slap in the face.” He condemns the book because of its use of the word “ nigger.” Many school districts have banned this book for the same reason. What are your views on this subject? Since the Civil War, racism has been a very delicate issue with the American public. Whereas some people have tried to transgress this issue, pretending that race no longer plays a significant role in our country, other people still believe that there are serious racial dilemmas in the United States. I am one these people.

However, unlike some, I do not believe this problem can be solved by avoiding or sugarcoating the issue of race, as James L. Kilpatrick and several schools appear to be doing. In the novel *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* Mark Twain presents an adventure story filled with deeper meanings and controversial topics, two in particular being slavery and racism. Despite the usage of the word “ nigger” and the stereotypical portrayal of African Americans, I do not think schools have any justification in banning this book from reading lists. Mark Twain wrote *Huck Finn* during the Reconstruction period in the south, at a time when most Americans wanted to forget all about the institution of slavery and its consequences.

However, Twain set the time period of this novel prior to the Civil War when slavery was at its peak. Thus, the racist views he included in the book

mirrored the attitudes of most southerners during this time. Those that say that Huck Finn is inappropriate to be read in schools are in effect saying that a portion of United States history should not be taught in the classroom.

Although slavery was one of the most horrific periods in our country's history, to make sure nothing of its caliber ever occurs again, we must make sure every high school student is aware of the ramifications of such practices. By banning an important work in U. S.

history, these schools are ignoring the racial sentiments of this time period simply because the language in Huck Finn may not be appropriate. In addition, reading this novel hopefully invokes in people a sense of shame for the mistakes of our ancestors. Though the novel's language may offend some, it is African Americans and Caucasians alike who are offended. Nobody likes to look at the word "nigger" nor hear it used, however, we must accept that this word was at one time considered appropriate language.

Reading the novel, I was repulsed by this word and my stomach churned as I read about the ignorance and hate stored within the hearts of characters. However, I enjoyed reading this novel and gained a new perspective of life prior to the Civil War. I think that when schools ban the novel Huck Finn from their curriculum that they are in effect failing their students. Huck Finn is an excellent piece of literature, rich with history, description, and unique perspectives. By not allowing this book to be read in schools is like shutting students out from a valuable learning experience. Yes, they can still read the novel in their spare time, but they are not afforded the privilege to discuss this book openly in class or gain new perspectives into its meaning. In

addition, when African Americans refuse to read this novel they are depriving themselves of a experiencing a brilliant piece of literature.

I think that until you try something, you can't attack it, or else you are showing your ignorance and stubborn nature. Twain did not write this novel to belittle the African American race or to promote the institution of slavery. Twain wrote this novel to depict life in the South prior to the Civil War. Along with this depiction are the bias and racist attitudes prevalent in South at this time. For all those school administrators who say that the language and ideology of Twain's writing is offensive, well, maybe Twain wanted to offend people with this novel. Maybe he wanted to offend them so much that they would come to the realization that individuals should not conform to society's standards, one of these standards being slavery. Until someone is offended, status quo doesn't change.