

F R E E

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FreeLy

**16th Annual
REPORT in
CELEBRATION**

**of
NATIONAL
BANNED
BOOKS WEEK**

SEPTEMBER 30 - OCTOBER 6, 2012

CHALLENGED AND BANNED BOOKS IN
TEXAS PUBLIC SCHOOLS, 2011-2012



ACLU

AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION
of TEXAS

CELEBRATING BANNED BOOKS WEEK'S 30th ANNIVERSARY

FREE PEOPLE READ FREELY

2011-2012 School Year

Includes an exclusive interview with writer, professor and founder of *Nuestra Palabra: Latino Writers Having Their Say*, the non-profit organization behind the *Librotraficante Caravan*



'FREEDOM'

This year marks the 30th anniversary of Banned Books Week:
30 Years of Liberating Literature.

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Reflections

From Terri Burke
Executive Director

This year marks the 30th anniversary of Banned Books Week when Americans and Texans celebrate their right to read what they damn well please...or not. The ACLU of Texas pays tribute to this fundamental right -- and the First Amendment that safeguards it -- with an investigative report on books banned in Texas public schools. This is our 16th annual banned books report: *Free People Read Freely, Challenged and Banned Books in Texas Public Schools, 2011-2012*. We will continue to investigate and report so as long as Texas school districts continue banning books.

Each year when we contact every one of the state's more than 1,000 school districts, we ask which of the following categories were cited for a book's challenge or banishment: profanity; sexual content or nudity; violence or horror; offensive to religious beliefs; politically, racially, or socially offensive; drugs or alcohol. The answers usually involve some or nearly all of these categories. Although I continue to be surprised at some of the books that are challenged and the reasons why, I am happy to report fewer books were banned last school year. In many cases, those that were banned or restricted were in elementary school libraries where their content was considered too mature for younger children. The books weren't denied to older students.

Intellectual freedom—the freedom to access information and express ideas even if unorthodox or unpopular—provides the foundation for Banned Books Week. The ACLU of Texas believes that one person's views should not govern what others may read. At the same time, we believe parents have the right to limit what their own children read. In the main, however, we are persuaded by the late U.S. Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart who wrote: "Censorship reflects a society's lack of confidence in itself." Unconventional or minority viewpoints are as important for learning about our world and imparting society's values as conventional perspectives.

Banned Books Week draws attention to the danger that exists when restraints are imposed on the availability of information in a free society. We feature the story of "book trafficker" Tony Diaz who trekked across Texas to "smuggle" banned books into Arizona. Mexican-American history and culture classes, along with books in the curriculum, were forbidden in Tucson schools following passage of a state law that deemed ethnic studies seditious.

Texans we hope you will join with Houston Community College professor Tony Diaz and stand up for your **F**reedom!



Foreward

By Dotty Griffith
Public Education Director

If there's one thing that the ACLU is known for, it's free speech. That's why every fall for the for the last 16 years, the ACLU of Texas has marked Banned Books Week with the release of our exclusive report on the state of censorship in our state's public schools.

This report underscores our belief in a society where ideas are openly discussed and debated. We believe in your right to access information, and the right to make up your own mind about what you want to read and about what your school age children read.

Since the inception of Banned Books Week in 1982, sponsored by the American Library Association, libraries and bookstores throughout the country have staged local read-ins as part of their activities.

Join with us against censorship. Consider holding or attending a Banned Books event, such as a read-in during Banned Books Week September 30-Oct. 6. A read-in is simply an event where community members gather to celebrate and read challenged books. You can "read-in" at school, a local bookstore, library, or community center. You can even hold a read-in in your home or with your book club. Interested? Contact us (gwilliams@aclutx.org) and we'll help.

You may also choose to join with readers from around the world as part of the Virtual Read-In. Proclaim the virtues of your favorite banned books by posting videos of you or friends reading excerpts on a dedicated YouTube channel.

You may submit a two-minute video reading from a banned or challenged book. Need a title? Here is a list of banned literary classics as well as a list of frequently challenged books. Or you may be vigilant enough to have video eyewitness accounts of local challenges to post.

Once you have posted your video, please send an e-mail with the subject heading "Link for the BBW Virtual Read-In!" to bbw@ala.org with the link to your video. Send the ACLU of Texas a link as well to media@aclutx.org. We'll post your video on our ACLU of Texas Facebook page.

Enjoy Banned Books Week by reading a banned book!

Useful Links:

<http://www.bannedbookstx.org/resources/this-years-report>

<http://www.bannedbooksweek.org>

<http://www.youtube.com/bannedbooksweek>

<http://www.ala.org/ala/issuesadvocacy/banned/frequentlychallenged/challengedclassics/index.cfm>

An Overview

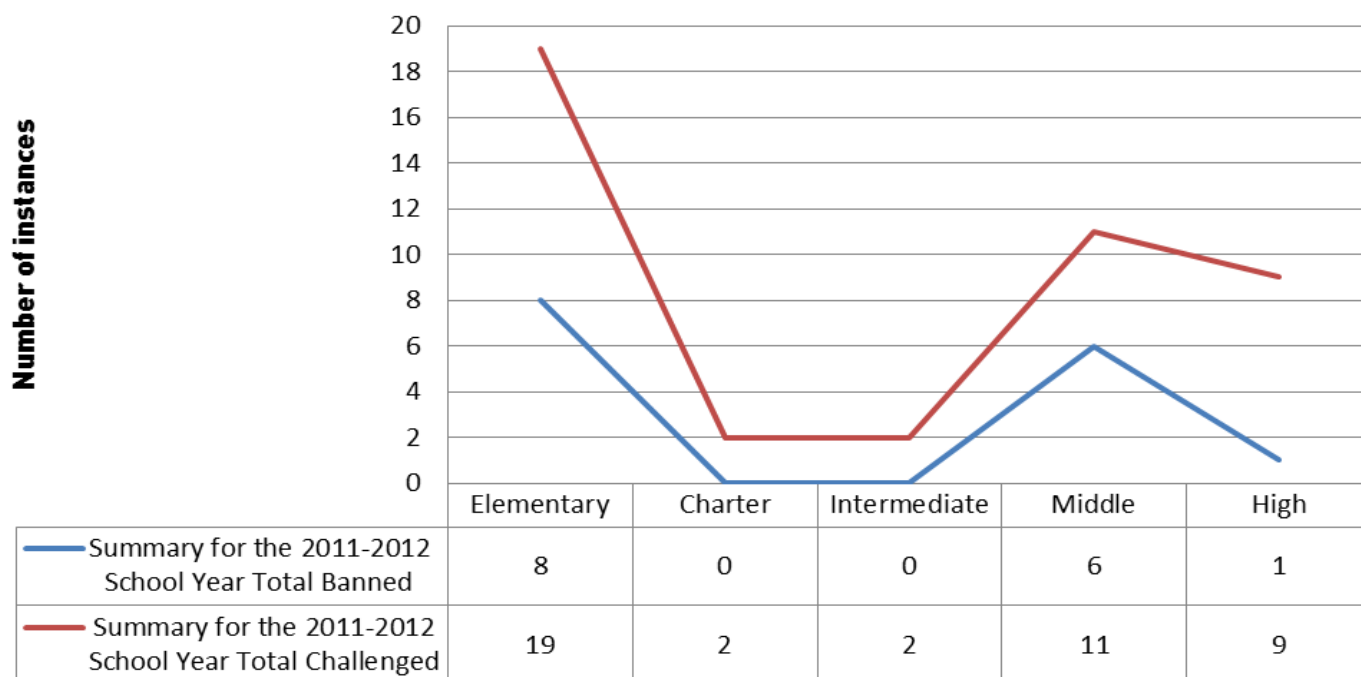
This year marks the 30th anniversary of Banned Books Week. Across the country, people will hold read-ins of “contraband” materials such as *Love and Other Four-Letter Words*, *The Adventures of Super Diaper Baby*, and *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* (which happens to be over 100 years old!)

This year’s report, which accounts for about 91 percent of the total number of Texas school districts, reveals some good news on the reading front. Over the past decade we have seen a steady decline in the number of books that have been challenged and banned, with 2003-04 and 2006-07 school years seeing a slight spike in challenges and bans. 2011-12 shows the lowest number of challenges and bans for the decade, with 50 challenged and 13 banned. This is an enormous step for Texas and a trend we hope will continue in the years to come.

Subject matters that concerned parents, teachers and even a bus driver, included topics such as LGBT; teen and race issues; cursing; bad behavior; creepy illustrations; and even work by Leonardo da Vinci!

Many of the challenged books, which might not have been intended for an elementary reader in the first place, such as DC Pierson’s *The Boy Who Couldn’t Sleep and Never Had To*, or Dan Santat’s *Sidekicks*, found their way to library shelves or classrooms of younger readers. Some schools indicated they “restricted” these books from the elementary schools, either moving to a higher grade level or restricting only for the child whose parents protested its use. Some chose to ban the challenged books all together.

Summary for the 2011-2012 School Year



Most often books at the elementary and intermediate level are challenged and banned due to the age appropriateness of the content.

Banned Books

Dark Rivers of the Heart, Dean Koontz

Dash and Lily's Book of Dares, Rachel Cohn

Call me Hope, Gretchen Olson

Love and Other Four Letter Words, Carolyn Mackler

Numbers, Rachel Ward

Sidekicks, Dan Santat

10,000 Dresses, Marcus Ewart

The Adventures of Super Diaper Baby, Dav Pilkey

The Boy Who Couldn't Sleep and Never Had To, D.C. Pierson

The Storm in the Barn, Matt Phelan

Vampires, Jennifer Besel

When is it Right to Die? Joni Eareckson

Restricted Books

A Farewell to Arms, Ernest Hemmingway

A Long Way Gone, Ishmael Beah

Beloved, Toni Morrison

Bone series, Jeff Smith

Catcher in the Rye, J.D. Salinger

Chronicle of a Death Foretold, Gabriel Garcia Marquez

City of Glass, Cassandra Clare

Incredible Journey through the Human Body, Nicholas Harris

Jake Reinvented, Gordon Korman

Molly's Family, Nancy Garden

Number the Stars, Lois Lowry

Shipwreck at the Bottom of the World, Jennifer Armstrong

Tess of the d'Urbervilles, Thomas Hardy

The Awakening, Kate Chopin

The Kite Runner, Khaled Hosseini

The Outsiders, S.E. Hinton

The Princess Diaries, Vol VI: Princess in Training, Meg Cabot

The Things They Carried, Tim O'Brien

Due Process Before Pulling a Book

The process to ban a book begins when someone makes a complaint. Books are almost always challenged by a parent or, every so often, by a teacher. When a book is challenged, a school might ban it, sometimes permanently. Fortunately, most districts report they have retained the challenged books or have restricted the book's use to a certain age or class level; or restricted it only for the child whose parents complained.

The process schools use to respond to a parental or community complaint usually determines the outcome of a challenge. It may come as a surprise to some that even the most prestigious of titles consistently return to the banned and challenged books list, even if they are more than a half century old.

In **Huffman ISD**, J.D. Salinger's classic *Catcher in the Rye* was challenged for its "profanity, sexual content, nudity, offensiveness, and alcohol use" by a parent at **Hargrave High School**.

In the tradition of Salinger, taboo topics get

the most parental scrutiny, such as transgender issues raised in Marcus Ewart's *10,000 Dresses*. **Cuero ISD** banned the book from French Elementary School for its reported "politically, racially, or socially offensive" content.

There are generally three ways for school districts to evaluate books:

- By the librarian or principal
- By the school board
- By a review committee.

For the **2011-12 school year**, more than half of the districts surveyed (59 percent) reported that when a book is challenged, it's reviewed by a "review committee," a stark difference to last year when half of the districts surveyed reported that review was an "administration only" procedure. "Administration" and "administration and other" officials now monopolize the process at only 21 percent of schools surveyed for 2011-2012.

According to the **American Library Association**, "A challenge is an attempt to remove or restrict materials, based upon the objections of a person or group. A banning is the removal of those materials. Challenges do not simply involve a person expressing a point of view; rather, they are an attempt to remove material from the curriculum or library, thereby restricting the access of others. Due to the commitment of librarians, teachers, parents, students and other concerned citizens, most challenges are unsuccessful and most materials are retained in the school curriculum or library collection."

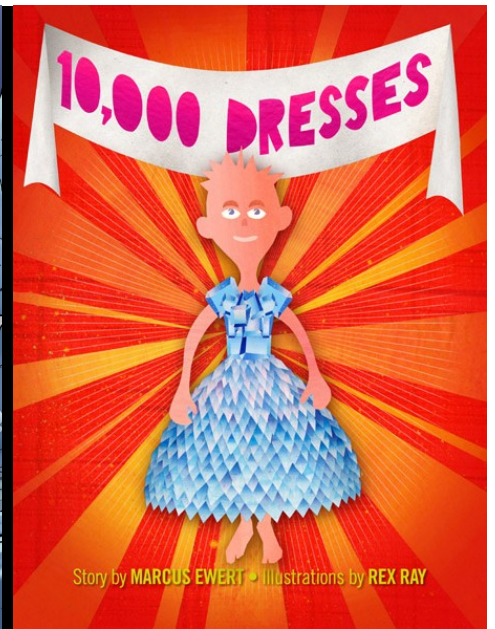
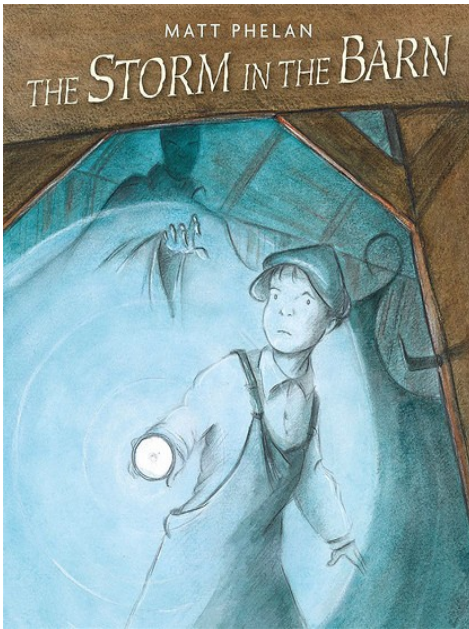


Summaries of Challenged and Banned Books

Red - banned

Orange = restricted

Black = no action taken



10,000 Dresses, Marcus Ewert

A young boy named Bailey dreams about dresses. Because he is a boy, his parents don't want him to think about dresses at all. Bailey meets a friend who supports his dreams, and they start making dresses together.

A Farewell to Arms, Ernest Hemmingway

During WWI, a young American ambulance driver serving in the Italian army and an English nurse fall in love. They stay devoted to each other during the challenges of wartime.

A Long Way Gone, Ishmael Beah

A memoir of a child soldier in Sierra Leone.

Amelia Rules: The Gym Class System, Jimmy Gownley

After her parents' divorce, an elementary school girl moves to a new town. On her first day of 4th grade Amelia meets some challenges in gym class.

Behind the Secret Window, Nelly S. Toll

A young girl's memoir of her childhood during World War II. Through artwork and text, heartbreaking and tragic moments are balanced with fantasy and hope.

Beloved, Toni Morrison

In 1873 Cincinnati, a former slave family's experiences and memories reveal the physical, emotional, and spiritual devastation wrought by slavery, even in freedom.

Bone series, Jeff Smith

The Bone cousins face many adventures after being run out of their hometown. As they travel through different places, they meet new people, learn about sacrifice, and enjoy fun times.

**"All our knowledge
has its origins in our
perceptions."**

-Leonardo da Vinci



"You don't have to burn books to destroy a culture. Just get people to stop reading them."

-Ray Bradbury



Call me Hope, Gretchen Olson

Hope, a pre-teen who is not treated well by her mother, thinks about running away. Instead, she decides to stay home and confront her mom.

Catcher in the Rye, J.D. Salinger

After being expelled from prep school, young Holden Caulfield takes a few days for himself in Manhattan. He looks up people he knows, has some new and surprising experiences, bonds with his sister, and changes his outlook.

Chronicle of a Death Foretold, Gabriel Garcia Marquez

A murder mystery entangled with love and deception.

City of Glass, Cassandra Clare

To save her mother's life, Clary risks her own by traveling to the City of Glass. She is unwanted in the city, but finds an important ally who helps her succeed.

Dark Rivers of the Heart, Dean Koontz

Before he knows it, Spencer Grant finds himself on the run and in love with a mysterious woman. He is reminded about some moments of his own past that could ruin him if his new enemies don't get to him first.

Dash and Lily's Book of Dares, Rachel Cohn

A love story that begins as a list of dares in a notebook on a bookstore shelf. Lily and Dash learn about each other at first only through their writing. Their relationship becomes more interesting as they get to know each other in person.

Da Vinci and His Times, Andrew Langley

A history book about the Renaissance that goes into illustrated detail about Leonardo da Vinci, his contemporaries, and general life in Europe.

Fade, Lisa McMann

After tapping into a classmate's nightmares, Janie is learning about the consequences of being a dream catcher. Learning the truth about herself, along with her confusing relationship with Cabel, keeps her life in scary suspense.

Fallen Angels, Walter Dean Myers

A teenager volunteers for the military when his dream of attending college falls through. Sent to the front lines, Perry comes face-to-face with the Viet Cong and the horror of warfare. But violence and death aren't the only hardships. As Perry struggles to find virtue in himself and his comrades, he questions why black troops are given the most dangerous assignments, and why the U.S. is there at all.

Hoot, Carl Hiaasen

Roy and his friends fight to stop the building of a pancake house in Coconut Cove, Florida, because they want to save a colony of owls that lives on the construction site.

I'm Your Peanut Butter Big Brother, Selina Alko

A boy is very excited about becoming a big brother, and wonders what his new sibling will look like.

Incredible Journey through the Human Body, Nicholas Harris

A journey through the human body, with explanations and colorful descriptions of all of the body's systems.

Jake Reinvented, Gordon Korman

Jake Garret is a wealthy, athletic, and popular new student at Fitzgerald High. He has his eyes on the girlfriend of the quarterback, and the other students start to fear Jake as they learn his secret.

**"The books that the world calls immoral are books that show the world its own shame."
- Oscar Wilde**



***Katy Perry*, Sarah Tieck**

A biography of pop star Katy Perry, this book follows her life and the decisions she has made in her career.

***Love and other Four Letter Words*, Carolyn Mackler**

Upon her parents' split, 16-year-old Samantha Davis must move to Manhattan, where she struggles with the changes in her location, her parents, and herself.

***Marked: A House of Night Novel*, P.C. Cast and Kristen Cast**

An introduction to vampire Zoey and the House of Night, in which she finds friendship, love, and adventure.

***Molly's Family*, Nancy Garden**

Molly is a kindergartner who has two moms. When she puts up a drawing of her family, she is challenged by another student who tells her that a family cannot have a mommy and a mama. Molly becomes sensitive to the fact that her family is different than others.

***More Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark*, Alvin Schwartz**

A sequel to *Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark*, a collection of spooky, gruesome and sometimes funny stories.

***Numbers*, Rachel Ward**

Each time Jem meets a new person, she instantaneously knows the date that person will die. When she sees that a bunch of tourists are going to die today, she realizes there will be a terrorist attack.

***Number the Stars*, Lois Lowry**

In 1943, a 10-year-old Danish girl learns how to be courageous when she helps shelter her Jewish friend from the Nazis.

***Sheep*, Valerie Hobbs**

A sheep herding dog loses his way and finds himself in strange places without his family. He finally finds his way to something that feels like home.

***Shipwreck at the Bottom of the World*, Jennifer Armstrong**

A true story that follows a team of explorers who attempted to cross Antarctica in 1914. Their ship gets trapped in ice, and the journey overland to safety is very dangerous. In the end, the leader, Ernest Shackleton, brings every man home alive.

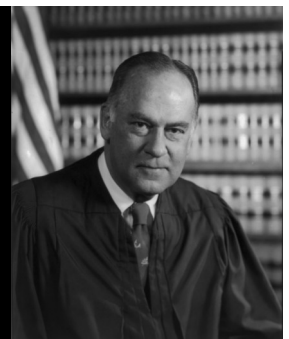
***Sicko* (movie), Michael Moore**

Michael Moore explores the topic of the profitable health care industry in the United States and how it impacts the under, and uninsured.

***Sidekicks*, Dan Santat**

Superhero Captain Amazing needs a sidekick and plans on turning one of his four pets into just that. The pets compete for the position because each one wants to be the one to help Captain Amazing save Metro City.

**"Censorship reflects a society's lack of confidence in itself."
-US Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart**



***Tess of the d'Urbervilles,*
Thomas Hardy**

A young peasant woman finds out she is a descendant of the noble d'Urbervilles family. She leaves home on a journey to learn more about her history and finds disappointment, rejection, and love.

***The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn,* Mark Twain**
Huck Finn goes on a journey down the Mississippi River. He meets interesting, and often hilarious, people along the way.

***The Adventures of Super Diaper Baby,* Dav Pilkey**
After acting out in the cafeteria, George and Harold are assigned an essay on good citizenship. Instead of writing about their superhero, Captain Underpants, they write about a new superhero, Super Diaper Baby and his fight against evil Deputy Doo-Doo.

***The Awakening,* Kate Chopin**
One woman's desire to find and live fully within her true self. Her devotion to that purpose causes friction with her friends and family, and also conflicts with the dominant values of her time.

**"The role of a writer is not to say what we all can say, but what we are unable to say."
-Anais Nin**



***The Blood-Hungry Spleen,* Allan Wolf**
Allan Wolf covers everything from the titular spleen to boy parts and girl parts with an admirable combination of scientific accuracy and poetic abandon. The poems explore the workings of our bodies with great animation, enthusiasm, and plenty of illustrations.

**Any book that helps a child to form a habit of reading, to make reading one of his deep and continuing needs, is good for him."
-Maya Angelou**



***The Boy Who Couldn't Sleep and Never Had To,* D.C. Pierson**

Fifteen-year-old Darren spends his time at school trying not to be noticed while drawing characters for a planned film series. He becomes friends with Eric who also has a love for drawing and creates a graphic novel series that is shaped by Eric's increasingly hallucinatory sleeplessness.

***The Kite Runner,* Khaled Hosseini**

Haunted by an act of childhood disloyalty, protagonist Amir returns to Afghanistan and witnesses many of the injustices perpetrated by the Taliban.

***The Outsiders,* S.E. Hinton**

Ponyboy lives on the fringes of regular society. He always has to watch out for the Socs, a gang of rich kids who enjoy beating up "greasers" like Ponyboy.

***The Princess Diaries, Vol VI: Princess in Training,* Meg Cabot, *Seventeen* magazine**

Mia begins her sophomore year dreading high school life without boyfriend Michael. She experiences different situations in school ranging from Lily nominating her for president, missing her boyfriend, taking care of her princess responsibilities, and experiencing her sexuality.

***The Storm in the Barn,* Matt Phelan**

In 1937 Kansas, 11-year-old Jack Clark has his good days and bad. He faces different challenges and also has to deal with the effects of the Dust Bowl, including rising tensions in his small town and the spread of a shadowy illness.

The Things They Carried, Tim O'Brien

The author remembers the past and searches for meaning in the details his memories of service in Vietnam. O'Brien describes in full detail the soldiers' conditions and experiences in Vietnam, and other details of the war.

Things Fall Apart, Chinua Achebe

Through the personal story of Okonkwo, the book documents the civilized and rich life the Igbo lived in Africa before the arrival of Europeans and describes the ruinous social and cultural consequences of the arrival of European missionaries.

This is Just to Say: Poems of Apology and Forgiveness, Joyce Kilmer

Mrs. Merz asks her sixth grade class to write poems of apology, and they end up liking their poems so much they decide to put them together into a book. The poems were written about crushes, overbearing parents, loving and losing pets, and more.

Tricks, Ellen Hopkins

Five teens, from different backgrounds find themselves in places and situations they never could have foreseen. The novel tackles issues about survival and how decisions can change your life.

Vampires, Jennifer Besel

This book describes the history and myths of vampires, their features, and the portrayal of vampires in popular culture.

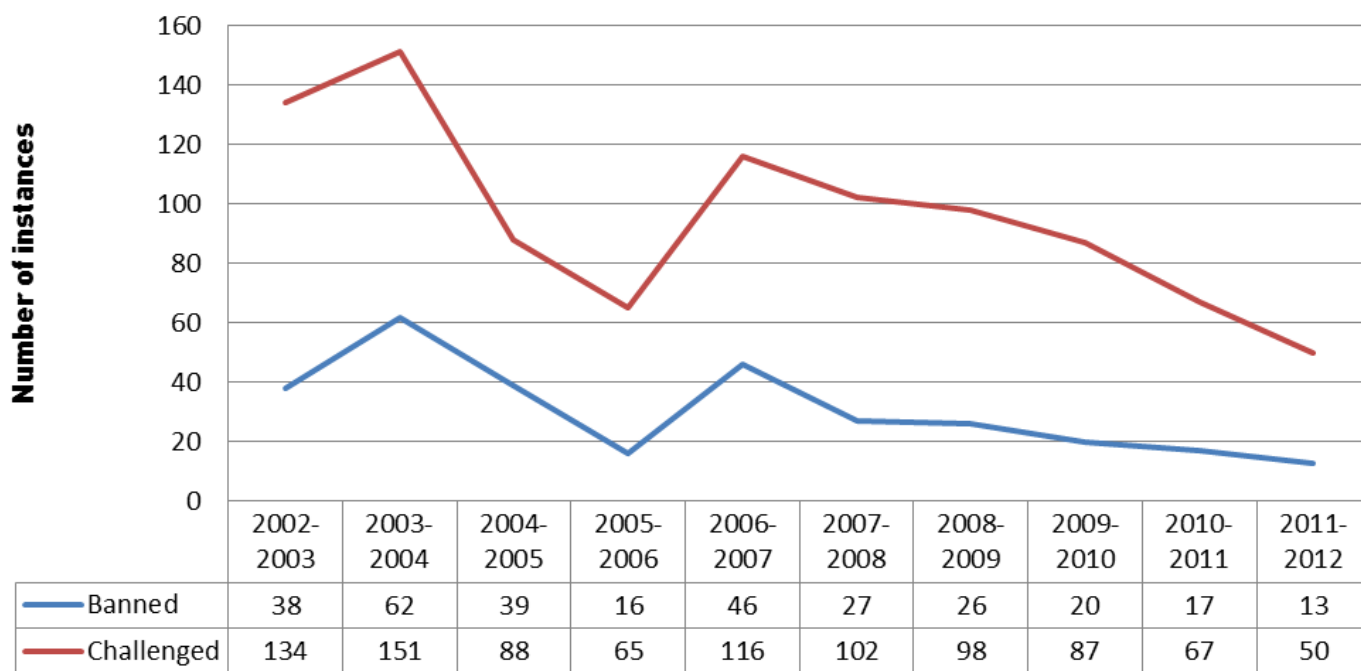
Water for Elephants, Sara Gruen

Jacob Jankowski is pushing 90 and living in a nursing home, abandoned by his family. As Jacob lies in his bed, drifting in and out of sleep, the compelling story of his experiences as a young man unfolds.

When Is It Right to Die? Joni Eareckson

Tada has been a quadriplegic since she was injured in a diving accident in 1967. This book explores the lives of families, the elderly, the disabled, and the terminally ill and lets them speak about assisted death.

CHALLENGED & BANNED BOOKS 2002-2012



Over the course of 10 years, 958 books have been challenged, and 304 banned, in Texas schools. Bans have been in steady decline since 2007.

2011-2012

Challenged Books by ISD

Aledo ISD

School: Coder Elementary

Book: *Hoot*, Carl Hiaasen

Reason cited: Profanity

Action taken: Retained

Note: Curse words including “damn and smartass” are in the book.

Allen ISD

School: Ereckson Middle School

Book: *The Boy Who Couldn't Sleep and Never Had To*, D.C. Pierson

Reason cited: Profanity; violence or horror; drugs or alcohol; sexual content or nudity; not appropriate for middle school

Action taken: Banned

Note: It was determined that this book was not appropriate for the Middle School age group.

The committee recommended that it was more appropriate for high school.

Axtell ISD

School: Axtell Middle School

Book: *Tricks*, Ellen Hopkins

Reason cited: Profanity

Action taken: Unclear

Note: A bus aide overheard a middle school student reading aloud a passage including profanity to a younger student.

Bandera ISD

School: Bandera Middle School

Book: *The Princess Diaries, Vol VI: Princess in Training*, Meg Cabot/*Seventeen* magazine

Reason cited: None provided

Action Taken: Retained, use restricted

Note: The magazine has been sent to the high school library, therefore we restricted it from the middle school library.

Burleson ISD

School: Centennial High School

Book: *Things Fall Apart*, Chinua Achebe

Reason cited: Violence or horror; politically, racially, or socially offensive; offensive to religious sensitivities

Action Taken: Retained without restriction

Note: None provided

School: Clinkscale Elementary

Book: *Molly's Family*, Nancy Garden

Reason cited: Politically, racially, or socially offensive; drugs or alcohol; educational suitability of the book

Action Taken: Restricted

Note: None provided

School: Hajek Elementary

Book: *The Storm in the Barn*, Matt Phelan

Reason cited: Profanity; violence or horror

Action Taken: Retained without restriction

Note: None provided

Calhoun County ISD

School: Travis Middle School

Book: *When is it Right to Die?*, Joni Eareckson

Reason cited: Offensive to religious belief; politically, racially, or socially offensive

Action Taken: Banned

Note: Suicide, euthanasia, suffering and mercy

Channelview ISD

School: Harvey Brown Elementary School

Book: *The Adventures of Super Diaper Baby*, Dav Pilkey

Reason cited: Name calling; boycotting testing; etc.

Action Taken: Banned

Note: None provided

Comal ISD

School: Rahe-Bulverde Elementary

Book: *Vampires*, Jennifer Besel

Reason cited: Violence or horror

Action Taken: Banned

Note: None provided

Conroe ISD

School: York Junior High School

Book: *Fade*, Lisa McMann

Reason cited: Profanity

Action Taken: Referred for reconsideration as library material

Note: The reconsideration request was initiated by a parent of a student at the school. The reconsideration committee has not yet convened to review the parent's request.

Corsicana ISD

School: Drane Intermediate School

Book: *Behind the Secret Window*, Nelly S. Toll

Reason cited: Profanity; offensive to religious sensitivities

Action Taken: Retained without restriction

Note: Use of the word "goddamn" offended a Christian parent. Use was reviewed and found to be in context and appropriate to the content of the memoir written by a Holocaust survivor who in two instances refers to being called a "goddamn Jew."

Cuero ISD

School: French Elementary

Book: *10,000 Dresses*, Marcus Ewert

Reason cited: Politically, racially, or socially offensive

Action Taken: Banned

Note: None provided

School: Cuero Intermediate School

Book: *Water for Elephants*, Sara Gruen

Reason cited: Sexual content or nudity

Action Taken: Retained

Note: None provided

Eagle Mountain Saginaw ISD

School: Eagle Mt. Elementary School

Book: *Katy Perry*, Sarah Tieck

Reason cited: Offensive to religious sensitivities

Action Taken: Retained without restriction

Note: None provided

Edna ISD

School: High School

Book: *Sicko* (movie), Michael Moore

Reason cited: Politically, racially, or socially offensive; parent felt views were too liberal

Action Taken: Retained without restriction

Note: Movie challenged in government classroom. Teacher also planned to show alternative side of issue. Challenge resolved informally without appointing committee.

Frisco ISD

School: Sem Elementary School

Book: *Sheep*, Valerie Hobbs

Reason cited: Profanity

Action Taken: Decision pending

Note: Formal paperwork was filed on March 17, 2012. A review committee has been formed and is in the process of reading the book in question.

School: Cobb Middle School

Book: *Shipwreck at the Bottom of the World*, Jennifer Armstrong

Reason cited: Profanity; violence or horror; offensive to religious sensitivities; politically, racially, or socially offensive; sexual content or nudity

Action Taken: Alternate book allowed

Note: None provided

School: Cobb Middle School

Book: *Number the Stars*, Lois Lowry

Reason cited: Sexual content or nudity; offensive to religious sensitivities; politically, racially, or socially offensive; violence or horror

Action Taken: Alternate book allowed

Note: None provided

Graham ISD

School: Crestview Elementary

Book: *Bone* series, Jeff Smith

Reason cited: Not appropriate for age group

Action Taken: Restricted

Note: Moved up to junior high school, where more copies of the series are needed; book not banned from district.

Grand Prairie ISD

School: Moseley Elementary

Book: *The Blood-Hungry Spleen*, Allan Wolf

Reason cited: Sexual content or nudity

Action Taken: Retained

Note: The image was a representation not actual nudity

School: Moore Elementary

Book: *Incredible Journey through the Human Body*, Nicholas Harris

Reason cited: Showing male and female body parts

Action Taken: Use restricted

Note: None provided

School: Moore Elementary

Book: *Amelia Rules: The Gym Class System*, Jimmy Gownley

Reason cited: Offensive for younger children

Action Taken: Not clear

Note: None provided

Huffman ISD

School: Hargrave High School

Book: *The Things They Carried*, Tim O'Brien

Reason cited: Violence or horror

Action Taken: Alternate book allowed

Note: All challenges were made by a parent

School: Hargrave High School

Book: *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, Thomas Hardy

Reason cited: Sexual content or nudity

Action taken: Alternate book allowed

Note: None provided

School: Hargrave High School

Book: *The Awakening*, Kate Chopin

Reason cited: Sexual content or nudity and offensive to religious beliefs

Action taken: Alternate book allowed

Note: None provided

School: Hargrave High School

Book: *Beloved*, Toni Morrison

Reason cited: Sexual content or nudity and offensive to religious beliefs

Action taken: Alternate book allowed

Note: None provided

School: Hargrave High School

Book: *A Farewell to Arms*, Ernest Hemmingway

Reason cited: Not appropriate for grade level

Action taken: Alternate book allowed

Note: None provided

School: Hargrave High School

Book: *A Long Way Gone*, Ishmael Beah

Reason cited: Not appropriate for grade level

Action taken: Alternate book allowed

Note: None provided

School: Hargrave High School

Book: *Catcher in the Rye*, J.D. Salinger

Reason cited: Profanity, Sexual content or nudity, offensive, alcohol

Action taken: Alternate book allowed

Note: None provided

Humble ISD

School: Bear Branch Elementary

Book: *More Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark*, Alvin Schwartz

Reason cited: Parent felt that it was disturbing for her son to read

Action Taken: Decision pending

Note: Forming a review committee and trying to find date for meeting to discuss the material in question

School: Pine Forest Elementary

Book: *Da Vinci and His Times*, Andrew Langley

Reason cited: Nudity

Action taken: Retained

Note: A parent challenged this book. While the book was retained, it was documented in the child's library account that his parent did not give him permission to access this book.

Joshua ISD

School: Joshua High School

Book: *Fallen Angels*, Walter Dean Myers

Reason cited: Profanity

Action Taken: Use restricted and alternate book allowed

Note: None provided

Kennendale ISD

School: R.F. Patterson Elementary
Book: *The Storm in the Barn*, Matt Phelan
Reason cited: Profanity
Action Taken: Banned
Note: None provided

Leander ISD

School: Wiley Middle School
Book: *Marked: A House of Night Novel*, P.C. Cast and Kristen Cast
Reason cited: Profanity and Sexual Content or nudity
Action Taken: Decision pending
Note: We are in the process of determining our next steps.

Linden-Kildare CISD

School: Mae Luster Stephens Junior High School
Book: *Dark Rivers of the Heart*, Dean Koontz
Reason cited: Profanity
Action Taken: Banned
Note: Parent complaint

Mansfield ISD

School: Mansfield High School
Book: *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Mark Twain
Reason cited: Politically, racially, or socially offensive
Action Taken: Review of challenged material in process
Note: Objectionable aspect of book: "the word 'nigger' over and over"

Nederland ISD

School: Helena Park Elementary
Book: *Sidekicks*, Dan Santat
Reason cited: Profanity
Action Taken: Banned
Note: Language was inappropriate for the ages of the students on this campus

New Caney ISD

School: New Caney's 6th grade campus
Book: *Dash and Lily's Book of Dares*, Rachel Cohn
Reason cited: Profanity and sexual content or nudity
Action Taken: Banned
Note: None provided

School: Robert Crippen Elementary
Book: *This is Just to Say: Poems of Apology and Forgiveness*, Joyce Sidman
Reason cited: Politically, racially, or socially offensive
Action taken: Banned
Note: Banned because there was a poem about suicide

Northside ISD

School: All Middle and High Schools
Book: *Love and other Four Letter Words*, Carolyn Mackler
Reason cited: Sexual content or nudity
Action Taken: Banned
Note: Decision made by the district to remove it from all middle and high schools

Plano ISD

School: Mitchell Elementary
Book: *Hope*, Gretchen Olson
Reason cited: Profanity
Action Taken: Banned
Note: Suggested title moved to middle school

Richardson ISD

School: Meadow Junior High
Book: *The Outsiders*, S.E. Hinton
Reason cited: The parent objected to the content (suicide, gangs, lack of uplifting content)
Action Taken: School offered to provide the student with alternate reading material. Note: The parent chose not to file an official "Request for Reconsideration of Instructional Materials," which would have resulted in the formation of a campus reconsideration committee to review the book.

Sheldon ISD

School: Sheldon Early Childhood Academy

Book: *I'm Your Peanut Butter Big Brother*, Selina Alko

Reason cited: Politically, racially, or socially offensive

Action Taken: Retained without restriction

Note: The committee investigation showed that no negative reviews could be found about the book or the author. The book had been in the library for the past three years and has been checked out 15 times without concerns. The committee recommended that that book remain available for checkout. The parent who challenged the book was given the option to speak to the librarian and help choose books for her child or attend library sessions with her child and help the child pick out books with parental approval.

Spring Branch ISD

School: Spring Branch Middle School

Book: *Num8ers*, Rachel Ward

Reason cited: Profanity

Action Taken: Banned

Note: None provided

Tidehaven ISD

School: Blessing Elementary

Book: *The Adventures of Super Diaper Baby*, Dav Pilkey

Reason cited: Politically, racially, or socially offensive; inappropriate language and behavior

Action Taken: Retained without restriction

Note: A parent believes that the book is inappropriate for lower elementary students. The parent met with the principal at Blessing Elementary using the informal reconsideration procedure listed in board policy on February 10, 2011. The parent stated that he would be researching the book more in-depth before deciding to make a formal complaint.

Tomball ISD

School: Tomball High School

Book: *Jake Reinvented*, Gordon Korman

Reason cited: Sexual content or nudity

Action Taken: Alternate book allowed

Note: The committee decided to continue using the book, but would offer an alternate book if necessary. The book has been used for many years. The teachers focus on the themes and the opportunity for reading skills development

Uplift Education - North Hills

School: North Hills High

Book: *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, Gabriel Garcia Marquez

Reason cited: Profanity, sexual content or nudity; depiction of women

Action Taken: Alternate book allowed

Note: We did not nor do we intend to pull the book from our reading list, but we did offer an alternative book and assignment.

Westlake Academy

School: Westlake Academy

Book: *City of Glass*, Cassandra Clare

Reason cited: Implied reference to incest

Action Taken: Use restricted

Note: None provided

Wichita Falls ISD

School: Wichita Falls High School

Book: *The Kite Runner*, Khaled Hosseini

Reason cited: Sexual content or nudity

Action Taken: Alternate book allowed

Note: The book was retained as a "choice" book. Students will have a choice of four books total in an English III pre-AP class. Teaching suggestions were also offered.

BATTLING^{for} BOOKS

Speaking with Tony Diaz

By Maida Asofsky and
Michelle Serrano

Tony Diaz is no stranger to battling for books and the right to read. The Houston Community College (HCC) professor and novelist is the founder of *Nuestra Palabra: Latino Writers Having Their Say*, and *Librotraficantes*, or book traffickers, an organization that runs “banned” school books to Arizona.

The academic activist became a book smuggler early this year after he learned that Tucson schools had dismantled a popular Mexican-American studies program and removed Hispanic history books from classrooms, including two titles published by the University of Houston’s Arte Público Press. During 2012 spring break, Diaz organized a grassroots caravan of writers, students and activists to travel from Houston to Tucson, trafficking banned books into Arizona.

Ethnic studies ban

While Arizona’s anti-immigrant “papers, please” law (SB 1070) is infamous, the state’s ban on ethnic studies isn’t as well-known. “A lot



Houston Community College professor, writer and activist Tony Diaz, addresses the crowd at a *Librotraficante* event in last March in San Antonio, Texas.

of folks don’t know that Arizona passed this law,” said Diaz. Under Arizona law (HB 2281) signed by Gov. Jan Brewer in 2010, ethnic studies may be barred from that state’s public schools for fostering “resentment” of another race. The bill’s text does affirm that instruction about the “holocaust, any other instance of genocide, or the historical oppression of a group of people based on ethnicity, race or class” is still allowed.

“Here is the mind boggling part. The law was created to prohibit courses that promote the overthrow of a government,” said Diaz, adding for emphasis, “Let that sink in.” In other words, the Arizona law equates ethnic studies with promoting revolution.



Organizers and activists exchange ideas at a *Librotraficante* event.

“Arizona legislators made me a *librotraficante* when they dared to make our history contraband,” said Diaz. The 2012 *Librotraficante* caravan to Tucson was intended to smuggle what Diaz calls “wet books” to students. “We started four underground libraries,” he said. The libraries were facilitated through a the caravan which started in Houston and went to San Antonio, El Paso, then to Albuquerque and Mesilla, New Mexico, and finally Tucson.

“The idea was that we wanted to compile at least one full set of the 85 books confiscated from Tucson classrooms,” explained Diaz.

Learn more: www.librotraficante.com.

September is Hispanic Heritage Month



On September 21, the *Librotraficante* Movement plans literary actions in Texas and other states as part of their effort to prevent Arizona’s censorship movement from spreading just as Arizona’s anti-immigration laws have been copied by other states.

Learn more: hispanicheritagemonth.gov.

Excerpts from Maida Asofsky's May 12, 2012 interview with Tony Diaz

The ACLU of Texas weekly radio show, "Give Me Liberty," airs weekly on Houston Community Radio (KPFT 90.5)



Q: What brought you to Houston and what you do for a living?

A: Well, I don't want the IRS to know exactly what I do for a living. We smugglers must be very coy about that! However, if I were to die right now please know that you'd be chatting with a novelist. I hold that really high in my own ID only because I think that this whole movement was sparked by the artists. This (*Librotraficante*) is an artistic movement.

Q: So you consider yourself a novelist, do you write poetry or short stories as well?

A: I appreciate you treating me like a writer because a lot of times what happens is there is a tension. If you meet me as an activist, you forget that I'm an artist, and I think both things have to go together. I just finished my latest novel, *Chill in the Locust Tree*. I write novels and essays, a few about the caravan were published on mommyverse.com. I don't do poetry unless its love poems.

Q: Do you teach creative writing?

A: Right now I teach introduction to Mexican-American literature and rhetorical analysis, but I also am faculty advisor to the newspaper, which I

love because I'm into freedom of speech, and I love creating this document through which students can express themselves.

Q: Do you have administrators who are reviewing it or do we have freedom of the press with the newspapers at Houston Community College?

A: You know what? I'm happy to say that for HCC, we have had a few times where our students express their opinions and stories - and there was some backlash - and our institution stood behind the First Amendment. So there have been many tests and I'm proud to say that HCC stood up for freedom of speech for our students.

Q: Now we really want to talk about your adventures with the *Librotraficante* caravan. So talk to me first about librotraficantes.com

A: I didn't ask to be a *librotraficante*. Arizona legislators made me one when they dared to make our history contraband. Once we (*Nuestra Palabra*) heard about it (the ban), we galvanized this informal network of writers, artists, activists, and we smuggled a thousand books back to Arizona.

We started four underground libraries. Mind you, this was in two months and we mounted an

\$80,000 caravan with \$15,000 donated by the people. And we made national news. I was on the news in England and Canada. It has been beautiful, but at the end of the day, Arizona made the mistake of messing with a core American value, freedom of speech.

Q: Arizona is famous for anti-immigrant laws but that's not what we are talking about here. We're talking about a law that basically ended ethnic studies of Mexican-American culture in Arizona public schools.

A: Yes. A lot of folks don't know that Arizona passed HB 2281. Here is the mind boggling part. The law was created to prohibit courses that promote the overthrow of a government. Let that sink in.

Q: And so, they determined that this particular course of study was promoting the overthrow of the government. Why?

A: I can't answer that because - I'll be honest - all the books that they found dangerous I have read several times. The insulting part is that if [these books] are promoting overthrow of the government, [they] are not really good at it because we have had the books for decades.

After reading the books again and again, I can't find anything dangerous. I can't find it. Which is the most radically titled? Ok, this week I'll look at *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* again. Author-educator Paulo Freire writes that the oppressed must not become the oppressors. That's not a good message for advocating overthrow of the government.

**"For every prohibition you
create you also create an
underground."**
-Jello Biafra



Q: HB 2281 stopped dead a whole curriculum on Mexican-American Studies. How fast did the schools have to stop it?

A: The Tucson Unified School District wanted to eliminate Mexican-American studies and [this law] set up the apparatus legally. I think it was (last) December that the notice came that Mexican-American Studies in Tucson Unified School District needed to comply with the law. It was January 10th or so when administrators forced teachers to walk into classrooms and remove books during class time...books by our most beloved authors. And, I'm sorry, if you don't know that that is a cultural offense you are on the wrong side of history. To me, every great movement begins with outrage at some cultural offense and to me this is on par with Ms. Rosa Parks being asked to go to the back of the bus. This is not to be tolerated. It is psychological warfare on our young.

Q: These were not bilingual books, or books in Spanish?

A: I'm glad you bring that up. Sometimes folks think it is because the books are in Spanish. All of these books are in English. And sometimes people ask, is it because the students are undocumented? The laws in Arizona are so draconian that non-documented students are scared to go to school. This law affects American citizens being denied the right to read books in English in American schools.

Q: Give me a couple of examples of books that were taken away and denied to these Arizona students.

A: I will give you the titles of some of these “dangerous” texts that supposedly support the overthrow of the United States government. *House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros. Evidently, my five readings of the book do not reveal a formula for overthrowing the government. Maybe when she destroys the Barbie doll, or maybe something about the red shoes means communist! I’m not sure!

But, I have yet to find the part in there about overthrowing the government. The book opened up my mind; excited me; made me want to learn more about literature, as it has done for many. Sandra Cisneros’ family was not affluent. She was the first to go to college and she winds up embracing literature and she becomes a Genius MacArthur grant winner. That’s what happens when our young are exposed to literature. And, that’s what people are trying to prevent, I think.

Drown is by Junot Diaz whose mom cleaned toilets in order for him to go to school. He winds up getting a master of fine arts and goes on to win the Pulitzer Prize in fiction. Another writer, Howard Zinn, is on the list. *Message to Aztlán* by Rodolfo Gonzales is on that list.

**“Real education should consist of drawing the goodness and the best out of our own students. What better book can there be than the book of humanity?”
-Cesar Chavez**



Q: That’s amazing. So there was a curriculum in Arizona schools that went all the way from K-12 in which the students studied Mexican-American culture in English, and it’s been wiped off the map?

A: The program was in place for six years. Students who actually went through the program now attest that it helped them get through college. This taught critical thinking.

I think that is the ultimate definition of an education and of the human experience, and what really bothers me is at the end of the day this is anti-intellectual. This was a great way for students to learn.

At some point, I have no doubt, unless we do something about it, this measure devised in Arizona, will, just like the anti-immigration legislation, spread to other states. If people mistake this as simply a Mexican-American studies issue, they are wrong. I have no doubt that now Arizona can say we don’t need Asian studies, and at some point they are going to say we are not going to implement African-American studies, because it’s against the law.

Q: The caravan sounded like one long party. I’d like you to explain what it was, what you did, where you went.

A: We launched from Casa Ramirez in the Heights, a Houston neighborhood. Every stop along the caravan route is important to our (Mexican-American) culture. From there we went to San Antonio to the house of Sandra Cisneros. She not only wrote a check that paid for the bus, she donated books, and we stayed in the famous Casa Azul.

From there we went to El Paso, and we were actually going to stop there just to rest, but they said, ‘Oh no, you are not, you are going to do a

huge book event here.’ And it was beautiful. El Paso has a strong literary community, a strong activist community. It was packed and they donated tons of books.

From there we went to Mission, New Mexico, to the godmother of Chicano literature, Denise Chavez, to her cultural center. She fed us, gave us books. And from there we went to the godfather of Chicano literature, Rodolfo Anaya, whose book, *Bless Me Ultima*, we should be celebrating the 40th anniversary [of], not banning it. Not only did he invite us to his house, he blessed the books, and, in honor of the Aztec spirit, we had some tequila shots with him as well.

Q: I can’t believe that was the only place you had tequila shots.

A: Well, that was the only place with Rodolfo! From there we went to Tucson. Along the way we started four underground libraries. The idea was that we wanted to compile at least one full set of the 85 books confiscated from Tucson classrooms, but also to get books from other writers. So any writer can go to librotraficante.com and see where these underground libraries are. Authors, please donate your books when they are released. We don’t want our history and culture to be at the mercy of an administration ever again.

We also organized cultural caucuses. We met with folks who know about school boards, and we are re-living the civil rights movement. We need to win back school boards across the country and we need folks to get involved in democracy every second they can.

Q: The one last thing I’d like you to talk about is “wet books.”

A: These were words out of the protestor’s handbook written right here in Houston. “Wet books” are books to be used in underground classrooms where we teach *librotraficante* Latino studies. Tucson Unified School District claims there is not a ban on these books because you could find them in libraries. You will always find books in libraries because I smuggle them. We will continue to “smuggle” them into book stores and libraries. Our culture will never be erased.

Fight Back Against Censorship! Hold a Read-in

In a world where we're swamped with information, few things outweigh the pleasure of getting lost in a good book. Literature takes the powerful forces that propel society and defines them in ways that influence our lives. We come out wiser, more compassionate, and braver for having dipped our imaginations, our intellects, and hearts into worlds beyond the confines of our own. Unfortunately, not everyone sees it that way.

A read-in is simply an event where community members gather together to celebrate and read challenged books.

You can do it at school, at a local bookstore, a library, or a community center. You can even hold a read-in in your home or with your book club.

Interested? Contact us and we'll try to help. Send an email to Gislaine Williams, gwilliams@aclutx.org. We can provide Bill of Rights bookmarks. And, if you like, we'll publicize your event to our email list so other civil libertarians in your area know about it. Download this report at www.bannedbookstx.org.

The screenshot shows the ACLU of Texas website with a dark purple header. The main heading reads "FREE PEOPLE READ FREELY" in large, bold, white letters, with the subtitle "Ban Censorship, Not Books" in a smaller, orange font to the right. Below the header is a navigation bar with teal buttons for "HOME", "THE PROBLEM", "WHAT THE ACLU IS DOING", "HOLD A READ-IN", "WAYS TO HELP", "RESOURCES", and an orange button for "SUPPORT FREE SPEECH".

The main content area has a light gray background. On the left, under the heading "WE BELIEVE IN AN EDUCATED CITIZENRY", there are three paragraphs of text. The first paragraph states: "If there's one thing that the ACLU is known for, it's free speech." The second paragraph states: "We believe in a society where ideas are openly disseminated, discussed, and debated. We believe in the right to access information, and the right to make up your own mind." The third paragraph states: "We believe in an educated citizenry – that our country functions best when citizens exercise their right to read, learn, and explore the world around them. We believe that the right to disagree is fundamental to our democracy. [MORE >](#)"

On the right side of the page, there are three stacked buttons with a dark purple background and white text. The top button says "JOIN THE FIGHT FOR FREE SPEECH >>". The middle button says "TELL US YOUR STORY >>". The bottom button says "READ THIS YEAR'S BANNED BOOKS LIST".

At the bottom of the page, there is a black banner with white text that reads: "For tips on planning and promoting your Read-in, go to www.bannedbookstx.org."

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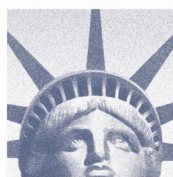
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