

Welcome

# Protecting the Freedom to Read: Books Unbanned and Digital Access for Teens

Nick Higgins - Chief Librarian,  
Brooklyn Public Library

Amy Mikel - Director of Customer Experience,  
Brooklyn Public Library



at

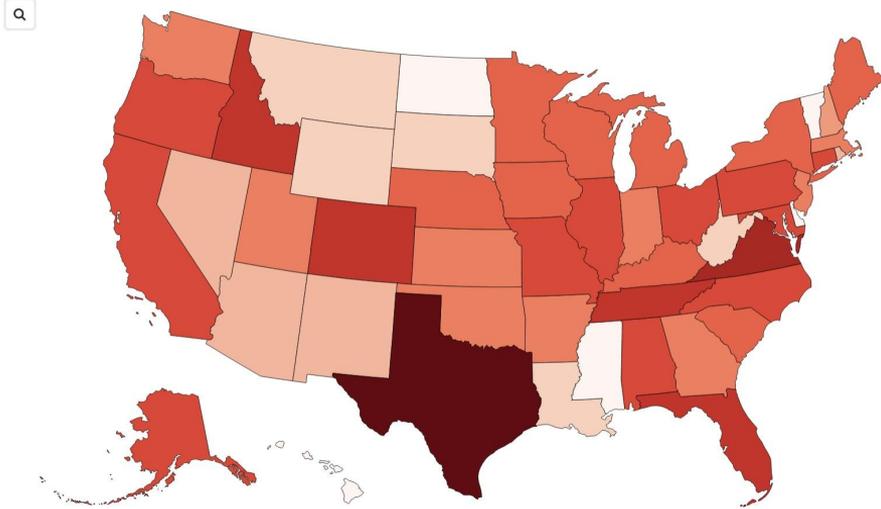
Books Unbanned.

# A national issue

## Titles Challenged Between January 1 and August 31, 2023 (preliminary data)

Attempts to censor books during this period: 531. Total titles challenged in those attempts: 3923.

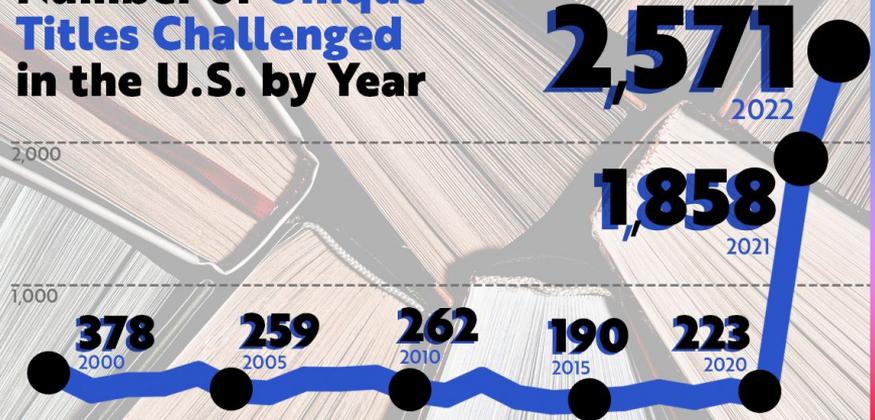
A challenge may result in access being retained, restricted, or revoked at a school or public library.



Data compiled by: American Library Association – Office for Intellectual Freedom

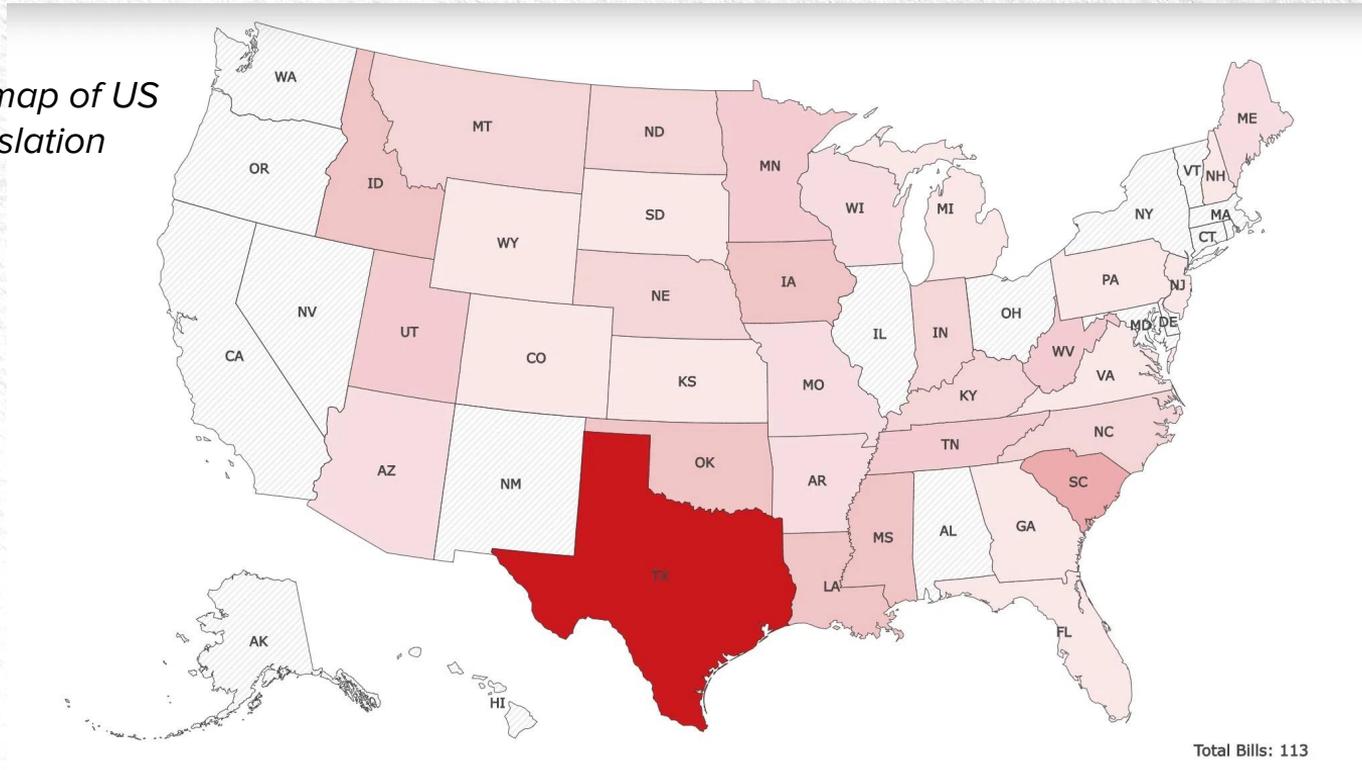
## Number of Unique Titles Challenged in the U.S. by Year

ALA American Library Association



# A national issue

*EveryLibrary map of US book ban legislation*

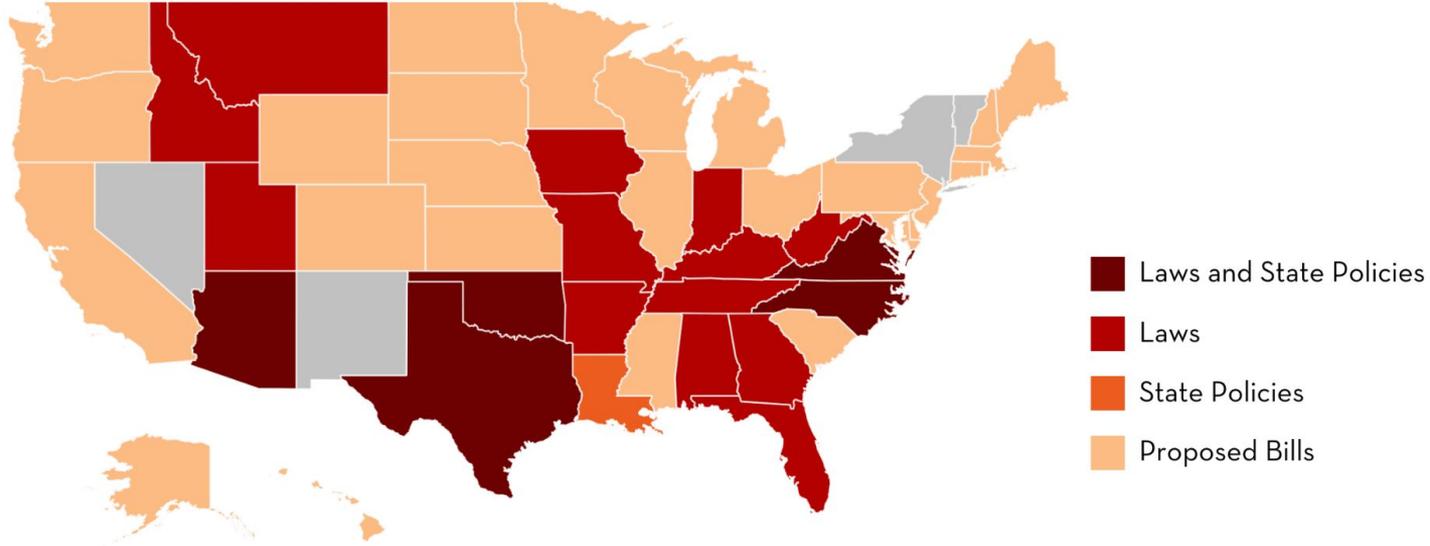


EveryLibrary is a staunchly non-partisan and fiercely pro-library organization.

# A national issue

## Map of Educational Intimidation Bills

January 1, 2021-August 17, 2023



Data from PEN America Index of Educational Intimidation Bills, January 1, 2021-August 17, 2023

Books Unbanned is born ...



**Help teens where they are.**

**Center teen voices.**

**Take control of the narrative.**

## Books Unbanned is born ...

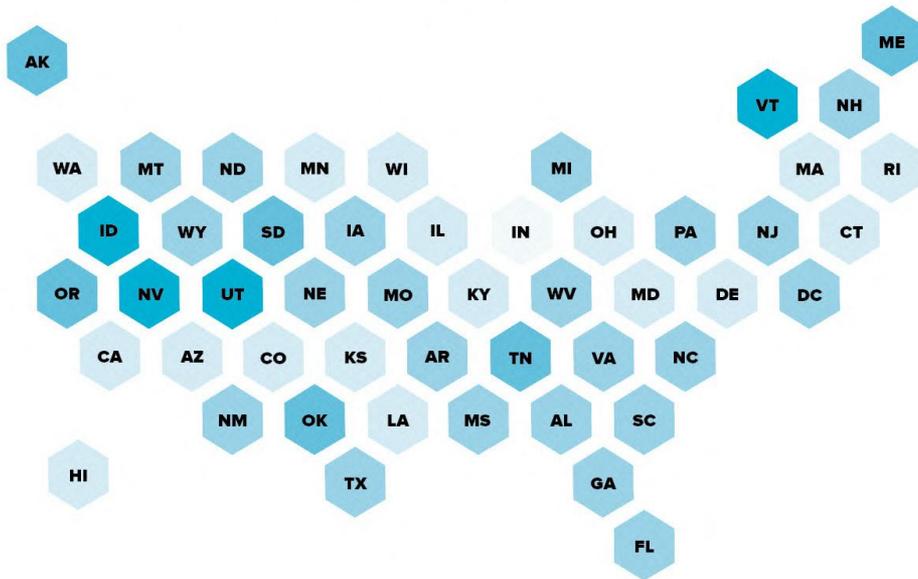
- Launched in April 2022 for National Library Week
- Teens ages 13-21 from any U.S. state, D.C. or territory can apply for an eCard for access to BPL' digital collection (500K+ digital titles and 100+ databases)
- Creation of a teen support network
- Privately funded

## By the numbers ...

- All 50 states, Washington DC and Puerto Rico
- 7,400+ applications
- 210,000+ check-outs

# Books Unbanned by the numbers

## Books Unbanned Launches Nationwide



# of eCards per 100,000 people

.5 3.3

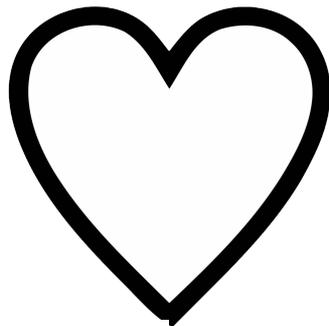
Map graphic showing Book Unbanned engagement by state

**States with highest per capita rates of card sign-ups:** Vermont, Idaho, Utah, Alaska, Maine, Nevada

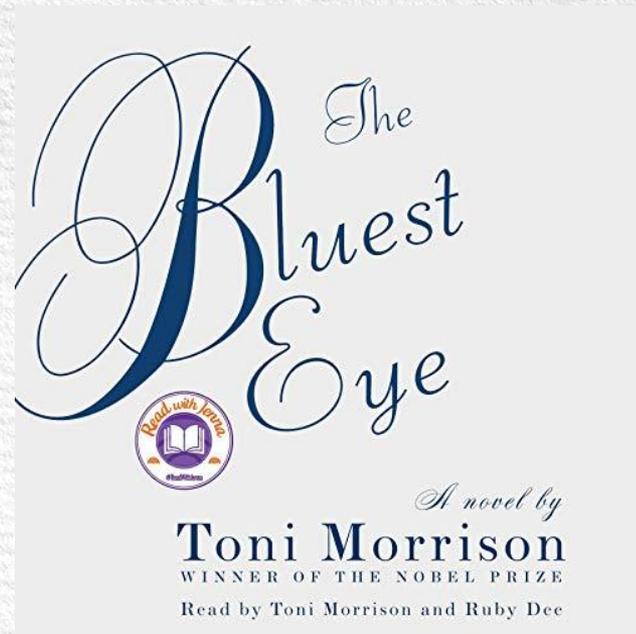
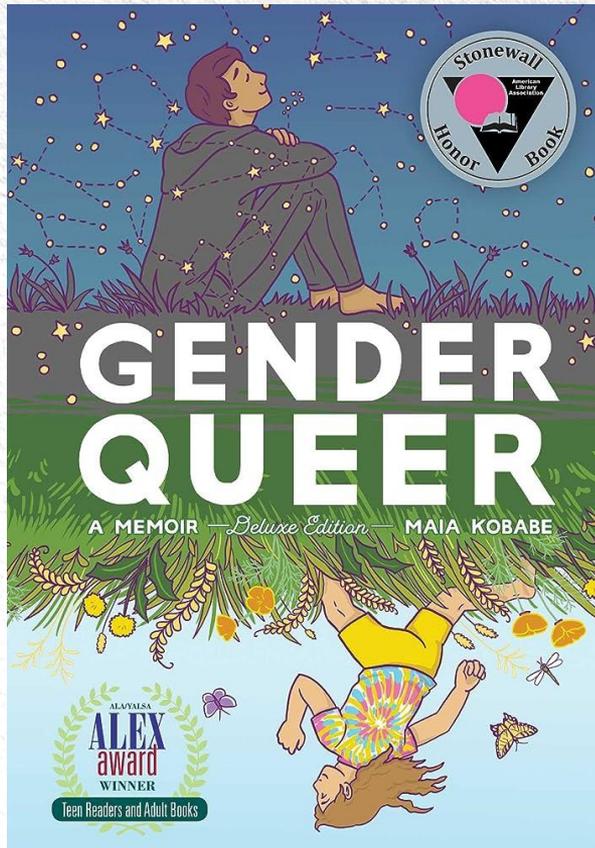
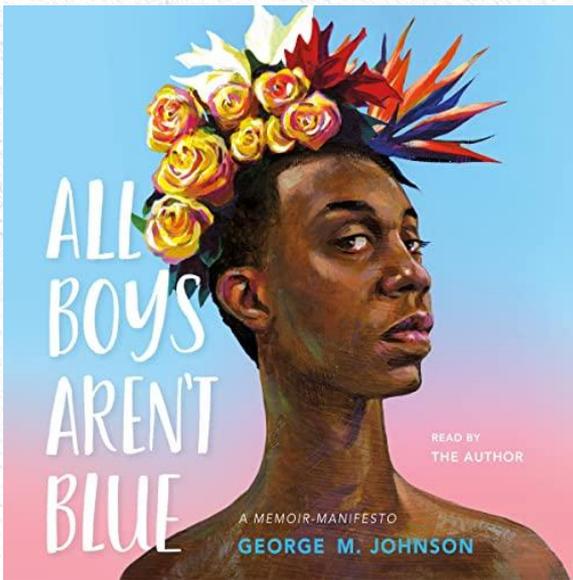
**States with highest raw eCard sign up total:** Texas, Florida, California, Pennsylvania, North Carolina

The Books Unbanned coalition

10/19/2016



# Telling the library story: The library is personal



## The library is democratic

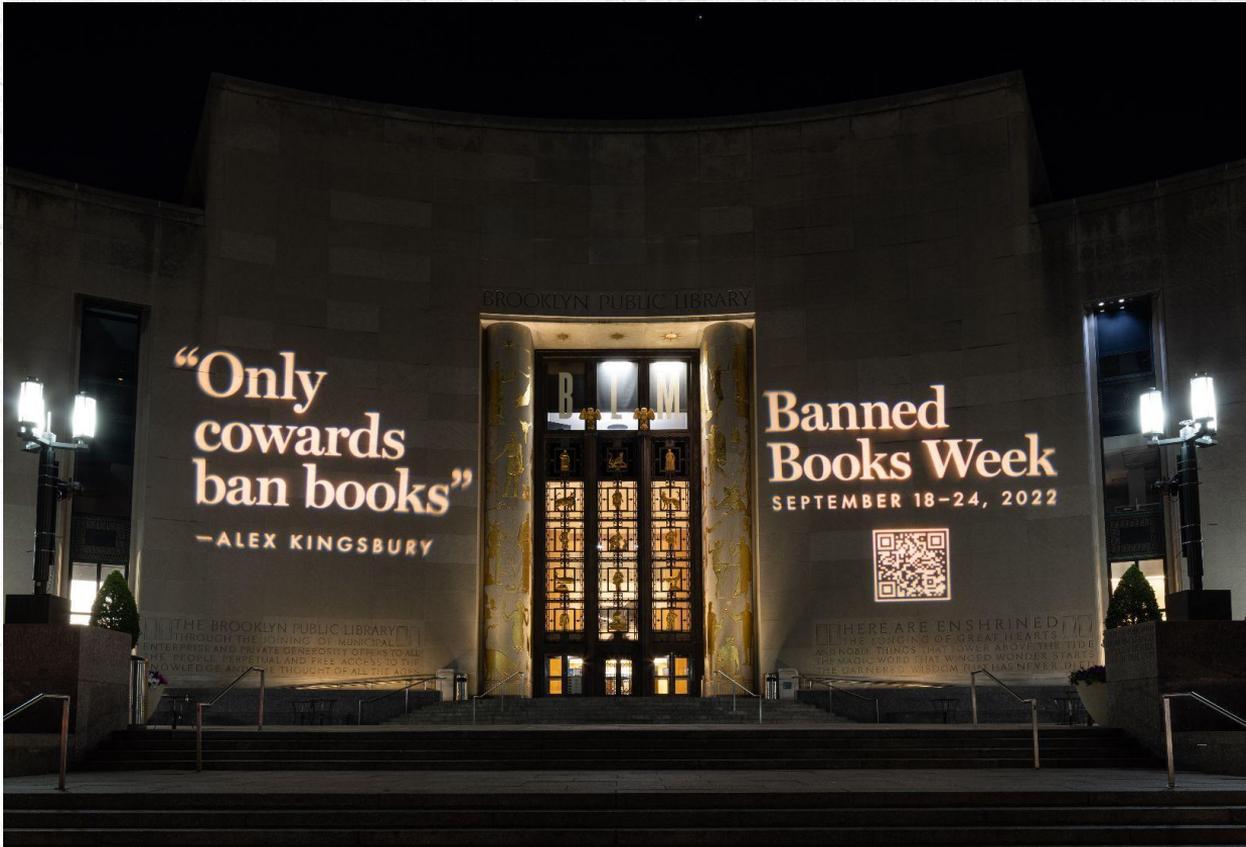
Do not speak of “our institutions” unless you make them yours by acting on their behalf. Institutions do not protect themselves. They fall one after another unless each is defended from the beginning.

. . . The mistake is to assume that rulers who came to power through institutions cannot change or destroy those very institutions - even when that is exactly what they have announced that they will do.

**Timothy Snyder, *On Tyranny***

The library is democratic

10/10/22



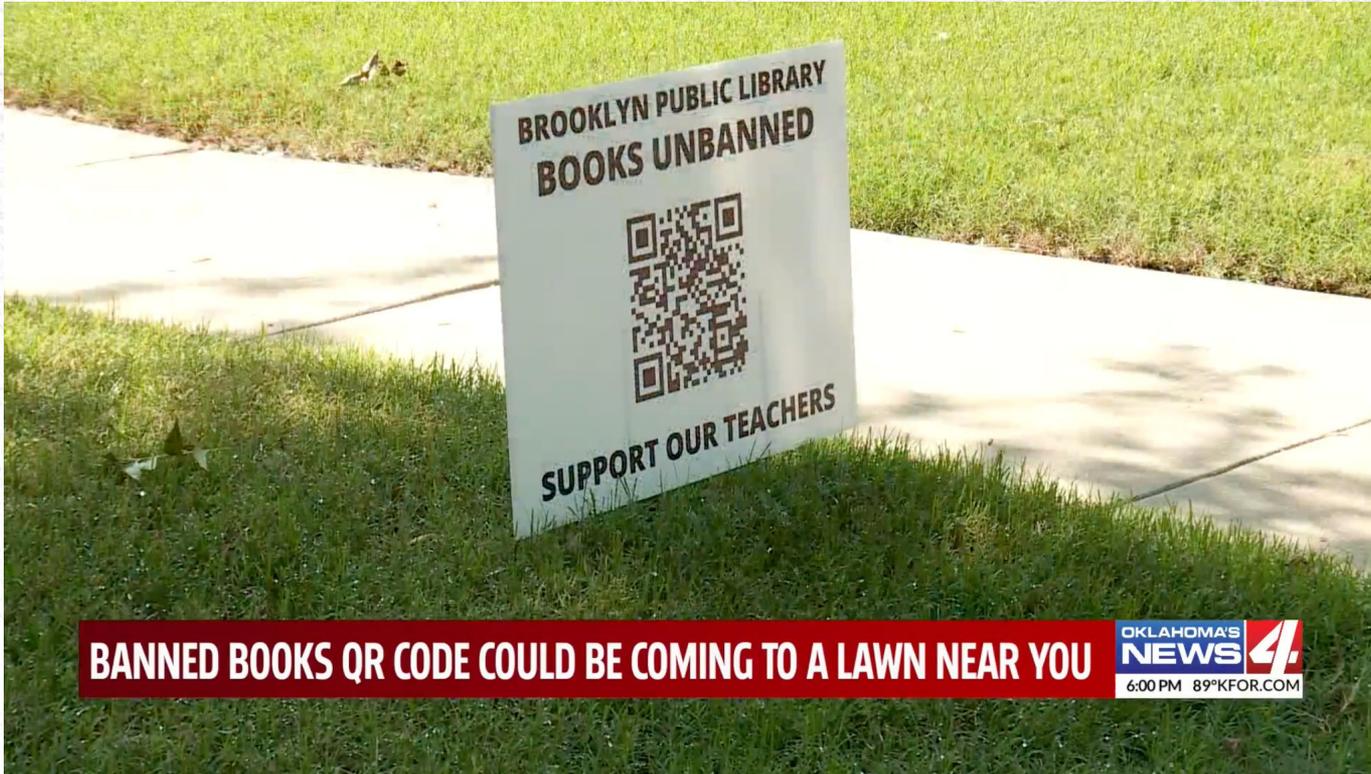
# The library is democratic



The library is hopeful



## The library is hopeful - Community participation



**BANNED BOOKS QR CODE COULD BE COMING TO A LAWN NEAR YOU**

OKLAHOMA'S  
**NEWS 4**  
6:00 PM 89°KFOR.COM

# The library is hopeful - Community amplification



**Barack Obama** ✓  
@BarackObama

...

We also owe a debt of gratitude to the team at the Brooklyn Library, and everyone who is helping make sure that readers across the country have access to great books.



nytimes.com

**How the Brooklyn Library Helped Fight Book Bans in Oklahoma**

An Oklahoma teacher left her job after she told her students how to access the library's banned books program.



## Only Cowards Ban Books

Alex Kingsbury  
A member of the editorial board.



Conservatives are frantically banning books about race, gender, sexuality and American history from public schools, lest students read them and develop empathy for others.

Now Oklahoma is trying to revoke the teaching certificate of an English teacher who shared this QR code with her students. It leads to the Brooklyn Public Library's free online collection of banned books.

Banning books is as un-American as it is futile in the age of the internet. But censorship still claims victims — authors and readers and the teachers and librarians who would connect them.

### LETTERS

#### Different Parties, Different Fe

##### TO THE EDITOR:

In the zeal to normalize the off-the-wall reactions of previously sane Republicans to the Trump investigations, Richard Lowry ("What if the F.B.I. Were Investigating a Democrat?," Opinion guest essay, Aug. 28) misses not one but several points.

First, the only investigators of Democrats that he can point to were obviously either factually deficient (Hillary Clinton's emails) or so clearly political (Bill Clinton's affairs) that any normal, nonpartisan person would — and did — question their legitimacy.

Second, the fact that both of those investigations occurred under Democratic administrations only reinforces the idea that, while there are of course extremists on both sides of the political spectrum, Democrats holding political office have generally been responsible enough to follow facts wherever those facts lead. That is a far cry from today's Republicans who ignore undeniable facts to preserve the cult of Trump.

And of course we know that once Republicans regain control of Congress — if they do — they will investigate anything they can. The endless Benghazi "investigations" have already proved that. But as Benghazi also proved, today's Republicans need neither an excuse nor a sense of vengeance to persecute Democrats. It's just what they do.

AARON R. CAIN, NEW YORK

##### TO THE EDITOR:

Richard Lowry tries to convince us that Trump supporters' anger at a legitimate F.B.I. investigation is to be expected. After all, he claims, wouldn't Democrats be equally angry had "their guy" been similarly investigated?

Well, Mr. Cain would not had Donald Trump for you to create germs of democracy at the polls. Mr. Lowry cumbered other side same was the G.O.P. that if it's behavior can be done. There is no need of it. Donald Trump is not a Democrat. And if it's behavior can be done. There is no need of it. Donald Trump is not a Democrat.

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The library is hopeful: Supporting the next generation of leaders

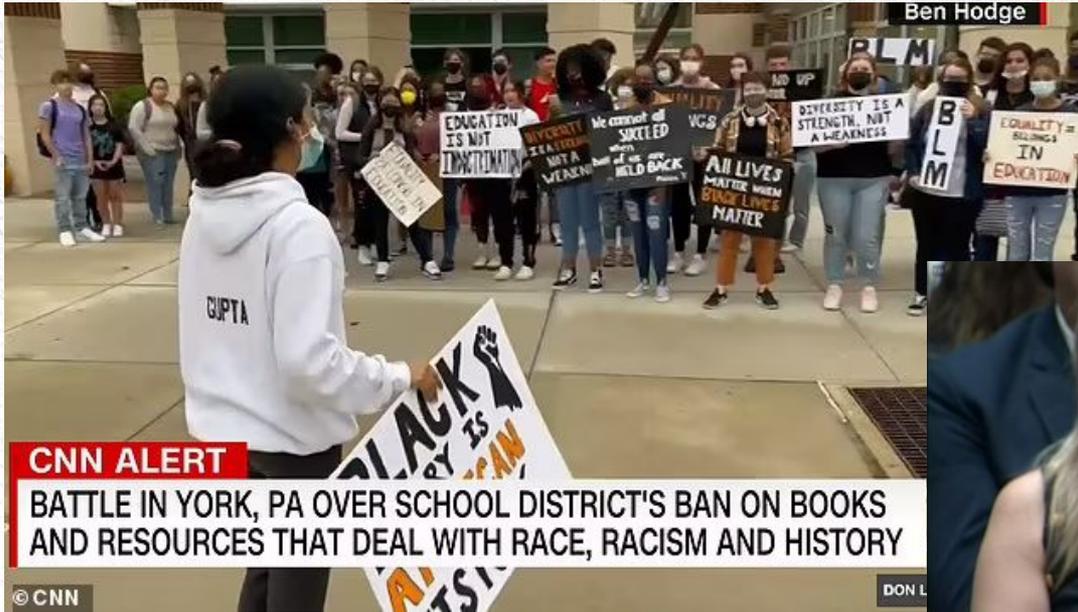


# FREEDOM TO READ ADVOCACY INSTITUTE

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Fall 2023

# Teen Testimonials



## Teen Testimonials

*These last two years I have had parents of other students telling my librarian that she shouldn't have books with lgbtq relationships and it has made me feel so isolated because I can't seem to have a freedom of reading books about people who are similar to me.*

\*\*\*\*\*

*I am someone who also has been through the challenges of figuring out who you are and being seen as normal rather than an anomaly. Banning books in the area makes it so hard to feel validated. By having this library card it allows a freedom and happiness about reading books that are like me. Thank you.*

## Teen Testimonials

***As a queer young person living in south Louisiana, finding safe ways to read books is very challenging. Not only are lgbtq friendly books hard to find, but they're also hard to get away with having.***

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***Where I live, the people who have a say are those who believe that our schools are well funded and teachers are brainwashing kids. My mom is a teacher here. She has been brought in to the principal for: teaching kids about Islam, not teaching about creationism, not teaching that Hinduism is a myth, and many others.***

## Teen Testimonials

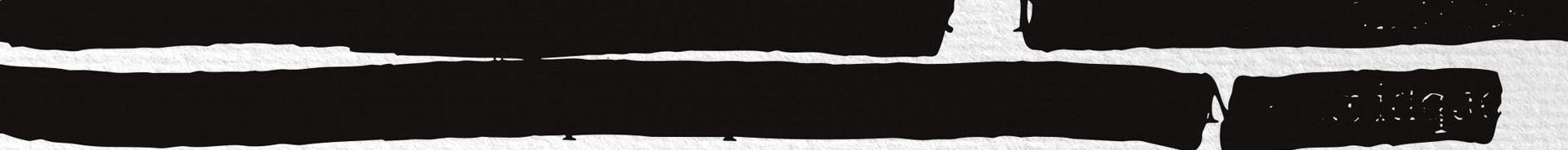
***I know that most of my teachers and my mom's friends have taken their classroom libraries out. A school librarian friend of my mom retired over this.***

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***I am reaching out in hopes to get a library card for my teen. He witnessed his english teacher having to throw out hundreds of books because of the banned list. He said she was in tears and he was deeply moved by this. Thank you for your consideration.***

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***My daughter deserves to see herself represented in media. Reading builds empathy and I want her to have access for her own sake as well as to experience books that detail other walks of life that will help her better understand the world around her.***



**Show up.**  
**Speak out.**  
**Vote.**

- Start with the youth – what are they seeing, hearing, needing? What does support look like for them? How can the library help? (then do that)
- Teens deserve (and have the right to) access – and public library cardholder signup policies are often not welcoming to them
- Be willing to challenge assumptions and take risks to increase access

Thank you!

**Nick Higgins**

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