

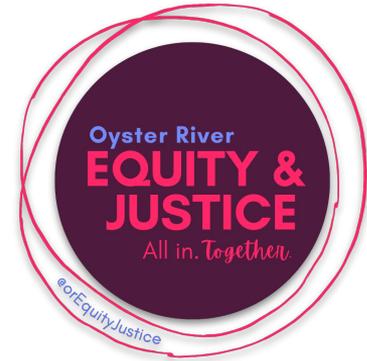
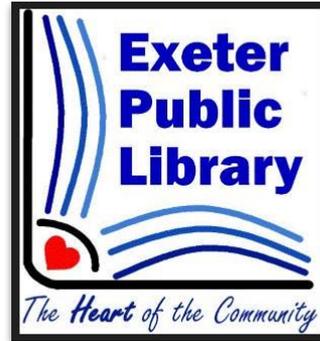
WHOSE FREEDOM?

Book Challenges in Our Schools & Libraries

A Racial Unity Team, Exeter Public Library, & Oyster River Equity & Justice Event



Our Co-Hosts:



Land Acknowledgment

This program takes place in M'squamscook, now called Exeter, in N'dakinna, the traditional ancestral homeland of the Abenaki, Pennacook and Wabanaki Peoples past and present. We acknowledge and honor with gratitude the alno8bak, "people," who have stewarded N'dakinna throughout the generations.



Common Language:

challenge: when an attempt is made to **remove or restrict** texts or materials based upon objections of an individual or group

ban: when something has been **removed from a particular space** (i.e., the challenge was successful)

ensorship: the explicit act of an authority taking measures to **explicitly suppress ideas and information**

“soft” censorship: the (more insidious, implicit) **limiting of access** to ideas & information

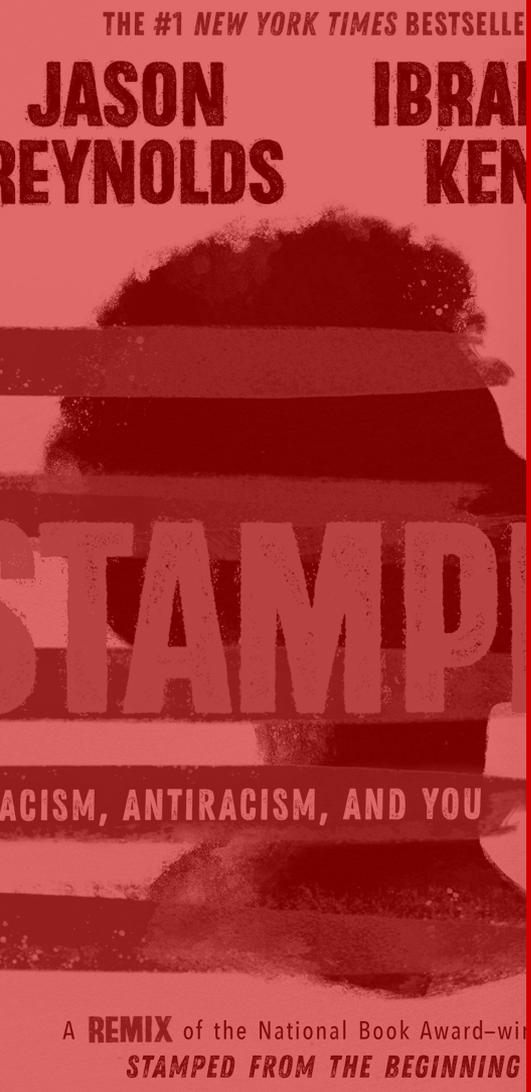
HB2, Sections 297-298

Right to Freedom from Discrimination in Public Workplaces and Education

- Prohibits the **discrimination of any individual** based on the characteristics of age, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, creed, color, marital status, familial status, mental or physical ability, religion, or national origin.
- The "Prohibition on Teaching Discrimination" provision prohibits teaching children that an individual, by virtue of their race, gender or other characteristics, is **inherently** inferior, racist, sexist or oppressive, **whether consciously or unconsciously**.

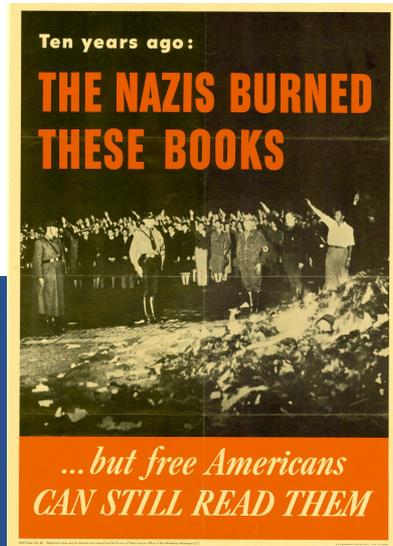
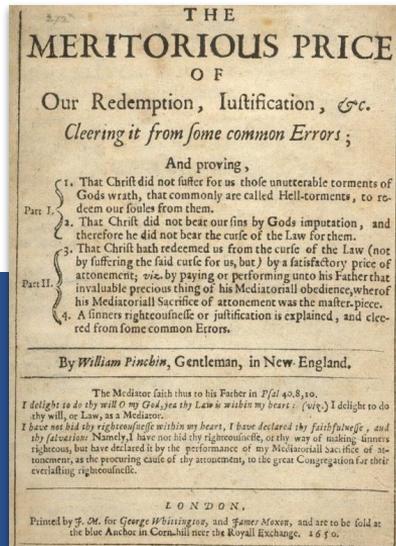
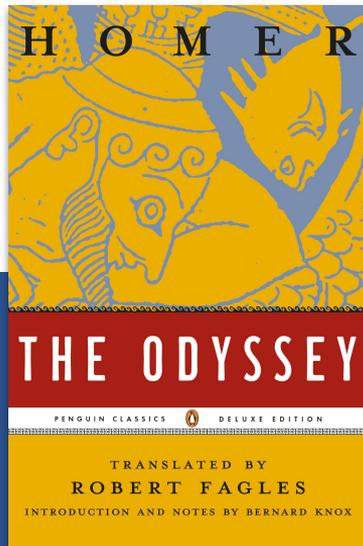
Why are we talking about HB2 in this context?

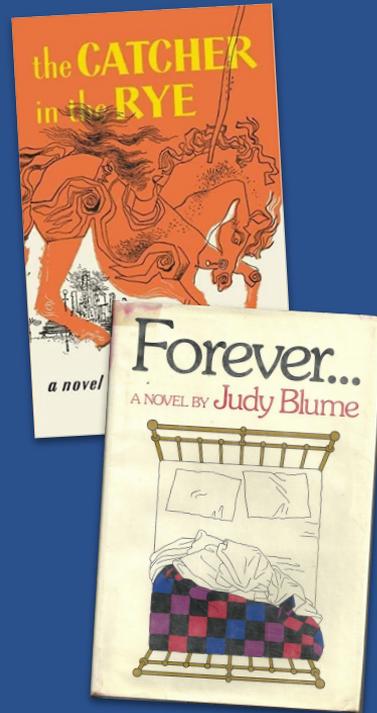
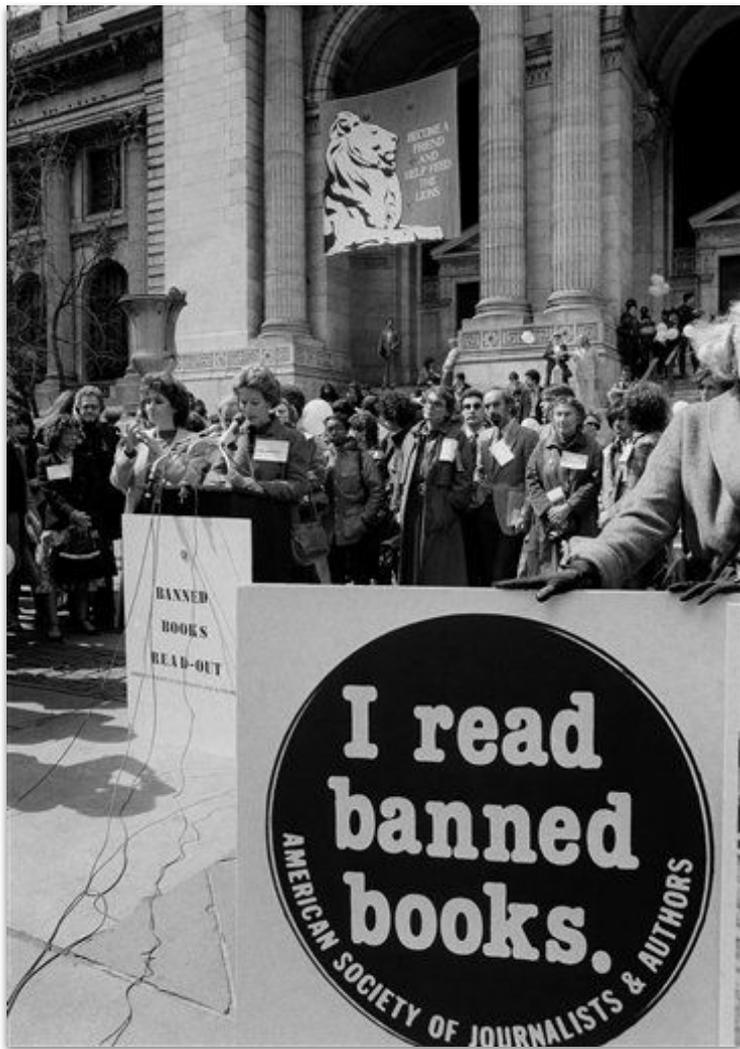
- While discussion of historical concepts related to discrimination is not prohibited by HB2, those who wish to delegitimize public schools and discourage diversity and inclusion work have perpetuated an inaccurate narrative that such work is indeed prohibited.
- This has led to fear and confusion among educators about how and what they may teach, while encouraging complaints against them that jeopardize their licenses and careers.
- The atmosphere of fear and intimidation caused by HB2 is exacerbated by the unprecedented rise in book challenges we are seeing not only across the state, but across the country.



Book Challenges: A Brief History

Shawna Coppola, Education Consultant & Co-Founder of Oyster River Equity & Justice





Important ?s to ask...

WHO?

Patterns of **identity**? Ideology? / Is **most affected**?

WHEN?

*Backlash to **perceived progress** / threats to **status quo***

WHY?

Reasons? How have these **shifted/changed** over time?

WHICH?

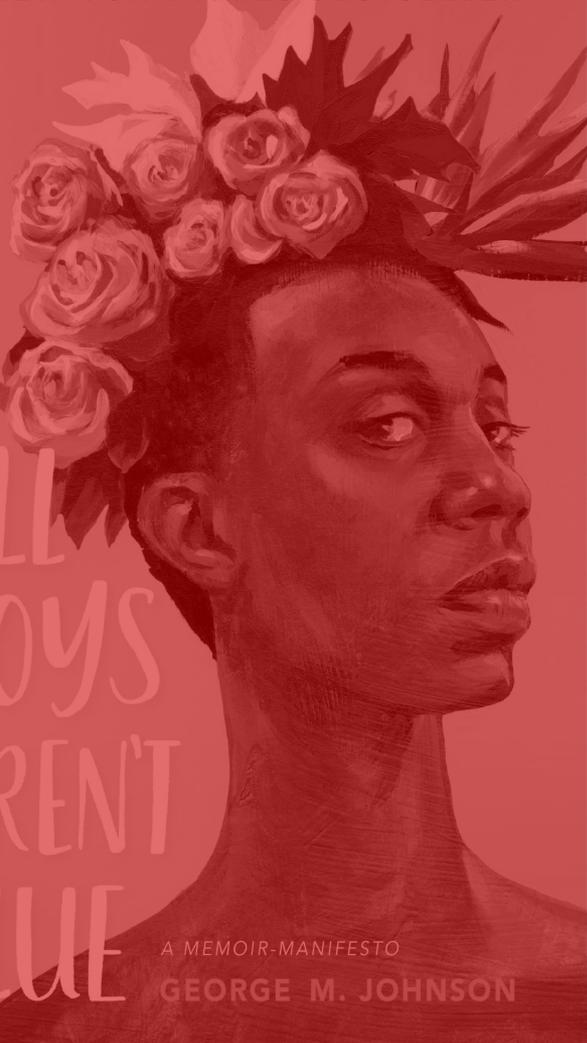
Patterns re: **most often challenged** or banned texts



Library Challenges

Hope Godino, Director, Exeter Public Library

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER



School Challenges

Mark Giuliucci, Exeter HS librarian

Joel Iwaskiewicz, English Teacher, Exeter High School



Legal Challenge to HB2

Devon Chaffee, Executive Dir., ACLU-NH

H E C O M P L E T E



ACLU of New Hampshire

@ACLU_NH



BREAKING: We filed a new court brief (w/ @NEANHNews and @AFTNewHampshire) on behalf of our clients, Andres and Tina, in our challenge against the state's "banned concepts" law. Here's a message from Andres and Tina:

HI, MY NAME IS
TINA KIM
PHILIBOTTE.

1,338 views 0:02 / 0:58



Responding to Challenges

Lori Fisher, NH State Library

Julia Lanter, Asst. Dir., Exeter Public Library

Co-Chair NHLA Intellectual Freedom Committee

Member ALA GNCRT - Preparing for and Addressing Challenges to Comics in the Library Committee

What NH Libraries & the Public Can Do Regarding Challenges



Whose **F**REEDOM?
Exeter Banned Books Program
September 20, 2022

Top Ten Most Challenged Books List 2021 Released by American Library Association on 4/4/2022...

- 729 challenges tracked in 2021 (usual annual amount is in the 300s)
- 1,597 titles were targeted in 2021
- *Gender Queer* (Maia Kobabe), *Lawn Boy* (Jonathan Evison) and *All Boys Aren't Blue* (George M. Johnson) are the top three, all being challenged for LGBTQIA+ and sexually explicit content/images
- For more info, read [State of America's Libraries Special Report: Pandemic Year Two](#) (pdf) by the American Library Association, published 4/4/2022

Latest ALA Challenge Statistics (9/16/22):

- Between 1/1/22 and 8/31/22, ALA documented 681 attempts to ban or restrict library resources
- 1,651 unique titles were targeted
- Over 70% of the 681 attempts to restrict library resources targeted multiple titles. In the past, vast majority of challenges targeted a single title each time
- Nationally we are on track to exceed challenges reported in 2021

Origin of current challenges:

- Many of the reported challenges since 2020 are by parents – up 50% since 2018, while other categories of challengers such as patrons, boards, or officials have stayed the same or dropped
- However, the majority of these parent challenges are not independent groups of concerned parents, but members of national organizations trying to fracture efforts of inclusion & equity in our schools and libraries
- These national groups are well-funded, well-organized, and are targeting all states. Examples: Moms for Liberty (most organized NH chapter – Hillsborough County); No Left Turn in Education (NH FB group w/95+ members); Purple for Parents (affiliated with the Facebook groups “Mary in the Library”). Also: articles on Granite Grok with themes espoused by these national groups.

Best Practices for Dealing with a Challenge:

- Know the policies/processes in place and where to find them. This includes the Collection Development Policy and the Reconsideration process/form for both school and public libraries
- Lock down any personal social media accounts
- Not every social media post warrants a response
- Don't take anything about the situation personally
- Practice active listening and de-escalation techniques

Active Listening Tips:

- Be attentive to the person in front of you (not distracted)
- Pay attention to body language
- Ask open ended questions
- Repeat back to the person what you think you just heard from them (clarifying that you understand what they are asking for/saying)
- Acknowledge feelings without agreeing or disagreeing
- Don't react – listen more than prepare to respond

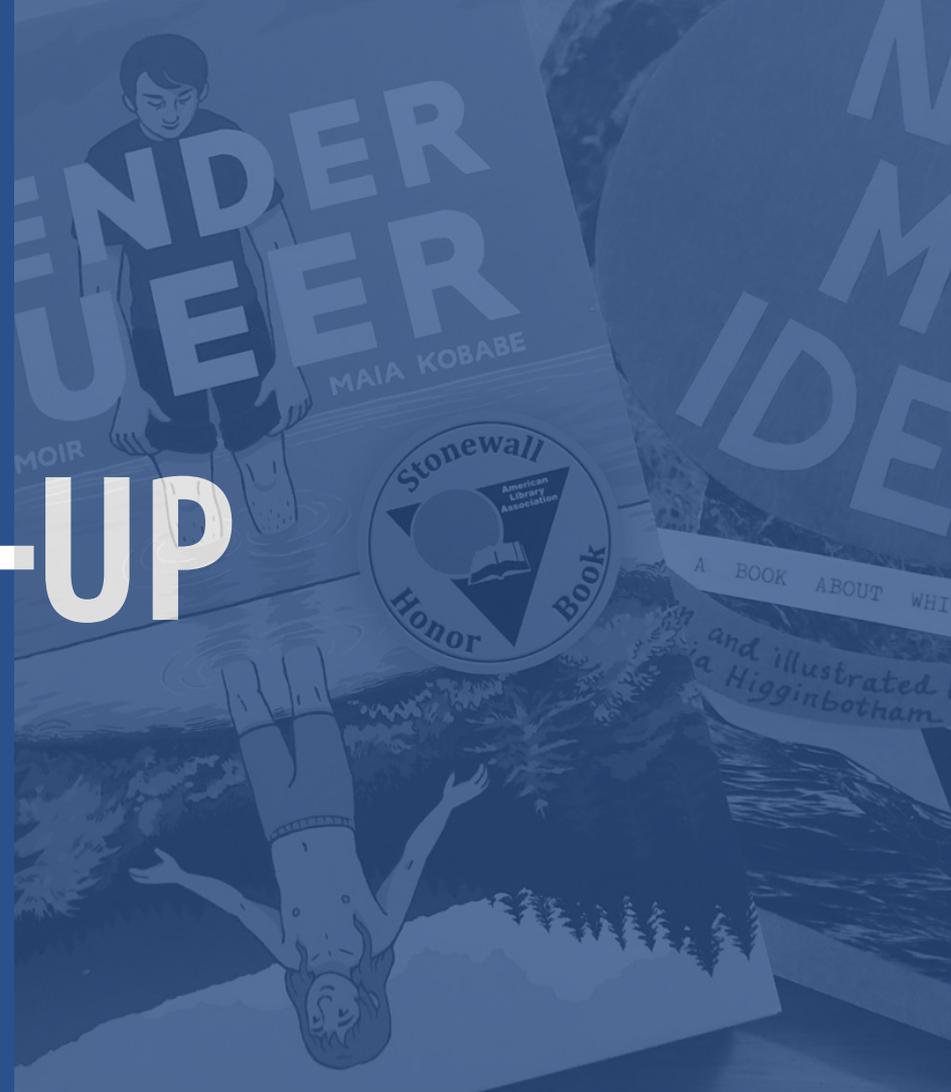
De-escalation Tips

- Pause
- Respond, don't react
- Keep body language open and neutral
- Ignore challenging tone/words and loaded questions
- Validate feelings and experiences – don't discount, but don't agree*
- Don't take anything they say personally

**Many people do the “uh-huh” noise when listening – DO NOT, since it is often taken for agreement instead of an involuntary, habitual response*

FINAL WRAP-UP

Key Points to Remember



Important ?s to ask...

WHO?

Patterns of **identity**? Ideology? / Is **most affected**?

WHEN?

*Backlash to **perceived progress** / threats to **status quo***

WHY?

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WHICH?

Patterns re: **most often challenged** or banned texts

How will you commit to action?

Suggestions for Community Members:

- **Pay attention. Become familiar w/ your institutions' policies** re: text selection; stay up to date on news & issues around censorship.
- **Educate yourself.** Learn the histories/patterns behind book censorship & suppression of ideas.
- **Support local school/library boards.** Consider attending a meeting, communicating your support publicly, etc.
- **Help bring awareness** to the issue by “wearing” your commitment, writing emails/letters, and/or amplifying social media posts & news.
- **Get involved.** Volunteer in the classroom, at the library, w/ local DEIJ orgs, etc.
- **VOTE.** Understand your local candidates and their stances on Freedom to Read issues. If you don't know, ASK!



*HOW WILL YOU HOLD
YOURSELF ACCOUNTABLE
TO YOUR COMMITMENT?*

How will you commit to action?

For Educators & Librarians—in addition to what's already been stated here tonight:

- **Resist.** Respond to complaints with reminders of **freedom of choice, freedom of speech, and intellectual freedom.**
- **Become familiar with & offer alternatives** when experiencing caregiver objections to assigned books.
- **Practice transparency.** Notify families of your thinking around text selections that may pose challenges ahead of time.
- **Stay informed.** Remind families with concerns of your institution's policies around text selection and/or intellectual freedom.
- **Stay Calm.** Know where support lies & call on your allies for help.



*HOW WILL YOU HOLD
YOURSELF ACCOUNTABLE
TO YOUR COMMITMENT?*

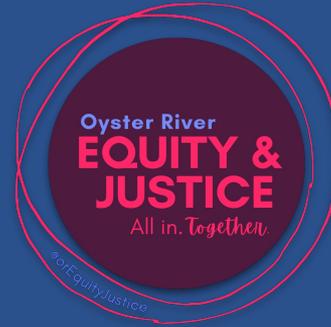
Thank you for coming.



racialunityteam.com



exeterpl.org



[@orequityjustice](https://twitter.com/orequityjustice)



exeternh.tv

We are happy to take your questions!

ROLE PLAY:

Book Challenger & Library Staff

Book Challenger & Library Trustee

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