



The Consequences of Banning Books

April 28, 2022 by Educator Barnes

The Indiana Freedom to Read Roundtable Event was held via Zoom on Thursday, April 28 at 8:00 p.m. The event was moderated by Chad Heck, Pike Township Librarian. The panel included an educator, a parent, a student, a state senator, and a book author.

The aim of the discussion was to address the problems that arise from banning books and to express why students should have access to a diverse selection of books even if those books make some adults uncomfortable.

Author Mike Curato shared that LGBTQIA+ books are needed because “visibility counts.” His book “Flamer” has been banned multiple times. Curato said his book has been called “vulgar and pornographic,” but he asserts that his “book is about suicide prevention.” Because he did not have access to books that centered on his identity, he struggled with “self-hatred” and “suicidal thoughts.” Additionally, Curato shared that when books are banned it places value on maintaining “innocence over lives.”

Dr. Erica Buchanan-Rivera, Washington Township Director of Equity and Inclusion stated that we should “center the needs of children and not the bigotry of adults.” Buchanan-Rivera also made clear that she doesn’t “sugar coat.” She explained that the “certain students” whose innocence may be trampled on if books are not banned tend to be “white” and “cisgender.” She does not believe that parents’ effort to “protect” should result in the “dehumanization of other children.”

Part of the reason, Buchanan-Rivera wrote her book “Identity Affirming Classrooms: Spaces that Center Humanity” was to help educators create better spaces for students. Furthermore, she reminded the audience that creating “liberatory spaces” takes risks and people must be prepared for these risks. She shared she has been threatened but was resolved to “keep pushing.”

Senator Shelli Yoder emphasized the need for more citizens to keep pushing. In Indiana, House Bill 1134, known as an anti-CRT bill, was defeated. She said it was the “relentless nature” of groups organizing that led to the defeat. Had this bill passed into law, it could have greatly impacted what teachers taught and impacted students such as Nithya M.

Nithya, a Fishers High School student, is Indian and the daughter of immigrants. She expressed feeling “out of place,” and it also took her a long time to find books that she could relate to. She stated that she felt “outside of the (American) culture” that she was supposed to be part of and felt that her “culture wasn’t desired” at school.

Parent Rachel Burke, who has a parent who is an immigrant, asserted that some lawmakers are “willfully not listening” when it comes to parents’ voices on legislation that is being pushed

through that could make students like Nithya feel not included and Curato simply shared that book bans are a form of “abuse.”

Although some people want books banned to protect students, who tend to be white, the panelists felt it is harmful to other students and that harm outweighs the need for books to be banned.