



## ‘Those who don’t build must burn’: The Real Story Behind Book Banning

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One resource you expect to find in schools is books. Books are used to inform, persuade, or entertain. Textbooks fall into the category of informing students with the necessary knowledge to learn concepts. For the most part, textbooks are not the center of controversy. Instead, the focus has been on children’s books, novels, and informative texts such as books that teach students about their bodies.

Parents have shown up to school board meetings across the country to protest about books in school libraries or novels taught in classes. Parents show up with a list of offensive books and even read excerpts. It is not that hard for parents to find a list of “problematic” books online and then browse the school’s library for the information. Many schools use Destiny as their school library platform. Students can log in and search their school library for books. All parents have to do is take the list of offensive books, search their names under their child’s account to confirm that are in the library, and then show up in a fit of rage about their children being able to have access to the books.

Before I continue, let’s name the elephant now. Most parents who are doing this are white. Furthermore, even mentioning this will get these same white parents annoyed, and they will quickly push forward a nonwhite person who also agrees with them as if this action validates their stance. The does not change who the majority of complainers are or the reasons behind why they are complaining.

My dad died during this pandemic. Over the course of my life, my dad shared his experiences during the Civil Rights movement and the racism he had faced. When he saw the social justice protests after the death of George Floyd, my dad said something I would have never thought he would say. He said, “I have hope.” Jim Stockton, my father, was a man who believed that racism is real and oppression is real; however, he never let that make him a victim. He believed that he could overcome any struggle. He believed that any person could make a difference and push forward change.

People who are Black like my dad have done exactly that. They have pushed for equity centered work, culturally responsive education, social-emotional learning, and trauma-based education. They fought for all of this because they want their children to learn, and they know these components help all children learn. Black parents and community members know that education is a path to a successful life and a way to become a productive citizen in society. They empowered themselves to push for changes to ensure that not only their Black kids would learn but also all children would learn.

The empowerment of Black parents and of parents of color made some white parents feel like they were losing power. They wanted to get their power back. They realized they no longer were the only voices bending the district’s ear to make changes. Now, instead of working with other parents who want the best for ALL children, they are using situations like critical race theory, social-emotional learning, and books as a way to get back power. It is really not about the books. It is about control.

It is sad that “Fahrenheit 451” by Ray Bradbury is becoming a reality. This classic text highlights a society that burns books because people just want to be happy, and books can make you sad. The text says, “Those who don’t build must burn.” In other words, people who don’t get their way destroy rather than create or collaborate.

Have any of these white parents’ children checked out these “harmful” books? Do they have proof that any of these books corrupted their children? Emotional distress for their white children is the story they are pedaling, and that’s why they want books removed. If they cared so much about emotional well-being, where were these parents when Black kids were distressed about how their history is covered, you know, starting with slavery and ending with Civil Rights and forgetting the fact that we were kings and queens? How do these white parents think Black children feel when books by Black authors and books about Black history are being removed? I guess it doesn’t matter how Black kids are feeling as long as white kids are fine.

When Black parents show up and show out, they aren’t there over hurt feelings. They are putting pressure on school leaders because their children aren’t learning.

Honestly, I feel sorry for kids whose parents are afraid of letting them read books. Their kids will end up like Guy Montag, the main character of “Fahrenheit 451” who has to find out on his own what was being kept from him. Once Montag learns that books are not harmful, the text states, “He was moving from an unreality that was frightening into a reality that was unreal because it was new.”

Fear is the real story behind the book bans. It is the fear of losing control. It is the fear that children will realize their parents’ values are problematic and their children will choose something else. If you come across one of these parents ask, “What are you afraid of losing?”