

FREED BETWEEN THE LINES:

BANNED BOOKS AND YOU

BANNED BOOKS WEEK SEPT 22-28, 2024

CENSORSHIP AT THE STATE LEVEL

In June 2023, Governor Pritzker signed a bill outlawing book bans in Illinois. Pritzker noted Illinois is the first state to do so: "...we are showing the nation what it really looks like to stand up for liberty" (Illinois.gov, 2023). The new law went into effect January 1 of this year. So why, then, are libraries across the state still celebrating American Library Association's (ALA) annual Banned Books Week? Although book bans are technically outlawed, Illinoisans have found ways around the new law, such as attempts to ban participation in book award selections (Koval, 2024). Other library advocates are opposed to the new law, saying the law should have solidified libraries' rights to review and deny book challenges, instead of outright banning challenges (Taxay, 2024).

In recent years, parents, patrons, and pressure groups have focused their book banning at a local level. On July 1, 2024, a Utah state law went into effect that "prohibits books when at least three of the state's 41 school district boards claim they contain pornographic or indecent material" (Hanson, 2024). Utah's state board of education then released 13 titles school districts could choose to ban, including *Forever* by Judy Blume, *A Court of Thorns and Roses* series by Sarah J. Maas, and *Blankets* by graphic novelist Craig Thompson. Idaho, South Carolina, and Tennessee are working on similar legislation, which bans books at the state level. This is a drastic change from localized challenges that have been popular in recent decades.

Of the top 10 most banned books of 2023...

- 7 of them were targeted and removed for containing LGBTQIA+ content
- All 10 were claimed to be "sexually explicit" (American Library Association, 2023b)

ALA's Office of Intellectual Freedom (OIF) tracks book bans annually, but estimates roughly 82-97% of book challenges go unreported.

Scan the QR code to view a panel discussion about book bans, featuring ALA President, Emily Drabinski and book banning historian Emily Knox. This panel took place July 31, 2024 and was arranged by University of Chicago librarians.



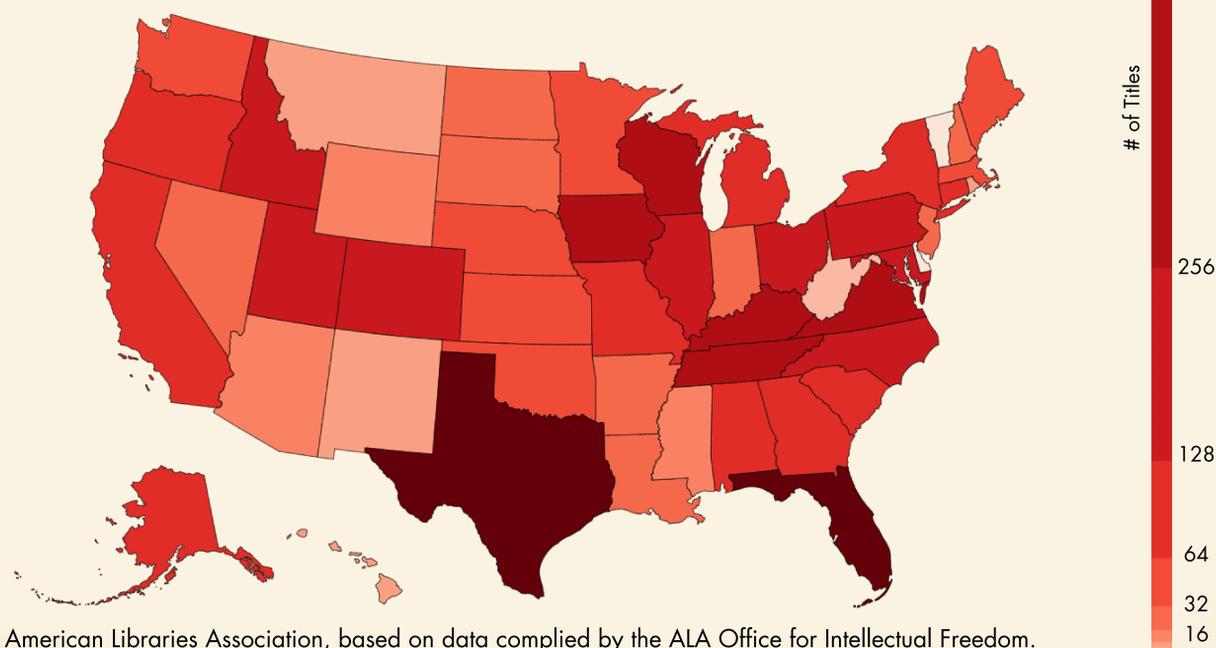
CENSORSHIP BEYOND BOOKS

Hiding books, destroying books, moving books from the children to the adult section, and/or requiring parent or teacher approval before accessing materials are all forms of censoring materials. But what about censorship beyond the literary world? Libraries often support initiatives that focus on popular culture, politics, and life outside of books and reading. In the past, American students have witnessed drag story hours interrupted, programs supporting Black Lives Matter canceled, and, more recently, displays about the illegal occupation of Palestine torn down (or not put up in the first place). These acts of censorship leave no room for students, professors, and school communities to have critical discussions about important issues.

Academic librarians within Illinois must be proactive in supporting intellectual and constitutional freedoms for students beyond literary censorship. As book banning becomes more popular across the country, and as students recognize the power of their voices, the more opportunities libraries have to support students' rights.

Titles Challenged in Public Schools and Libraries During 2023

Attempts to censor books during this period: 938. Total titles challenged in those attempts: 9,021. Unique titles: 4,240. A challenge may result in access being retained, restricted, or revoked at a school or public library.



Graph by American Libraries Association, based on data compiled by the ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom.

SOURCES

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American Library Association. (2023b, April 21) Top 10 Most Challenged Books of 2023. <https://www.ala.org/bbooks/frequentlychallengedbooks/top10>

American Library Association. (2020, Sept 9) Top 100 Most Frequently Challenged Books: 2010-2019. <https://www.ala.org/bbooks/frequentlychallengedbooks/decade2019>

Illinois.gov. (2023, October 3) Gov. Pritzker Signs Bill Making Illinois First State in the Nation to Outlaw Book Bans. <https://www.illinois.gov/news/press-release.27090.html>

Hanson, A.B., and Jesse Bedayn (2024, August 8) Utah Bans 13 Books at Schools, Including Popular 'A Court of Thorns and Roses' Series, under New Law AP News. <https://apnews.com/article/utah-school-book-ban-d7345be6a89cfa6cd2cb5ddd25fca700>

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Taxay, N. (2024, February 29). Some advocates remain skeptical about Illinois ban on book bans. The Daily Northwestern. <https://dailynorthwestern.com/2024/02/28/city/illinois-ban-on-book-bans-may-infringe-literary-freedom-advocates-say/>

NATIONAL DAY OF RACIAL HEALING

JANUARY 21, 2025

Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation (TRHT) was launched in 2016 by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to encourage sustainable change and to address the effects of systemic racism in America. Since 2016, countless towns, cities, states, and corporations have adopted TRHT principles by taking a close look at five different but interconnected areas: **narrative change** (truth telling); **racial healing** (trust and relationship building); **separation** (addressing segregation, colonization and concentrated poverty), **law** (reviewing discriminatory laws and policies), and **economy** (studying structural inequity and barriers to economic growth). TRHT emphasizes the need to work individually and together to combat the effects of racism. Among many partners, Dominican University was named a TRHT Campus Center in 2020 by the American Association of Colleges & Universities.

Building on TRHT, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation began hosting the National Day of Racial Healing in 2017. Their website states, “Fundamental to this day is a clear understanding that racial healing is at the core of racial equity.”

“Racial healing is the experience shared by people when they speak openly and hear the truth about past wrongs and the negative impacts created by individual and systemic racism.”

For the 7th annual National Day of Racial Healing, Dominican University is hosting lecturer and teacher Jane Elliott, known for her unrelenting work against racial prejudice and her Blue Eyes-Brown Eyes experiment.



COMMEMORATING WITH JANE ELLIOTT

Jane Elliott is a lifelong and internationally known teacher and diversity trainer. Born in 1933 in Riceville, Iowa, Elliott became a teacher after receiving a certificate from Iowa State Teachers College in 1952. In 1953, she began teaching.

Fifteen years later, while prepping for a lesson about Native Americans, Elliott watched her TV as newscasters began reporting the death of Martin Luther King Jr. After viewing the chaos that erupted in Black and white communities post-assassination and after her own third grade students had questions, Elliott decided to put together an experiment.

The goal of the experiment was to allow white children, for just a moment, to experience discrimination based on something as arbitrary as how they look. For her all-white class, this meant using eye color as a way to note who was superior and to simulate racial segregation. Elliott told her brown-eyed students they were better than her blue-eyed students, which at first caused light bullying. Over the week, brown-eyed students performed better on tests, were more confident answering questions, and became bossy and arrogant toward their blue-eyed peers. Blue-eyed children also transformed, however they scored worse on tests, becoming subservient and less confident learners and people.

The next week, Elliott reversed the superior eye color so that brown-eyed children were now inferior. While the effects on the superior and inferior groups were similar to Week 1 of the experiment, the taunting from the superior group was less intense. These students were then asked to describe their experiences, which Elliott then published in the Riceville Reporter for the whole town to read. The article was then picked up by the Associated Press and Elliott's experiment and her student's conclusions were now available for the entire nation to read.

Elliott continued this experiment on her third grade classes for more than a decade and was asked to visit countless TV shows, schools, and workplaces to speak about racial prejudice and injustice. Today, this experiment has been elevated to illustrate discrimination and systemic racism within a one-day seminar titled “A Collar in my Pocket.”

Though the Dominican community is not conducting this specific seminar for National Day of Racial Healing, there are countless lessons to learn from Elliott's past and current work. There are so many ways individuals and groups can fight against oppression, injustice, and prejudice. Get started by locating resources throughout this display.



Scan the QR code to view a PBS Frontline documentary, “A Class Divided,” which further explains Elliott's classroom experiment with third graders.

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JACKIE SIBBILES DRURY

Born: 1982
From: Plainfield, NJ, based in NYC
Education: Brown University, MFA in Playwriting
Play themes: race and racism; history; empathy; humanity; truth and reflection
Most known for: *Fairview*, Pulitzer Prize for Drama Winner (2019)
Other notable works: *We Are Proud to Present a Presentation About the Herero of Namibia Formerly Known as Southwest Africa...* (2012); *Illinoise* (2023)



PEARL CLEAGE

Born: 1948
From: Springfield, MA, based in Atlanta, GA
Education: Howard University, Spelman College, BA
Why Cleage writes: "expose and explore the point where racism and sexism meet...to find solutions and pass them on ... and to find language and to pass it on"- 1993
Other notable works: *Flyin' West* (1992); *Blues for an Alabama Sky* (1995); *Bourbon at the Border* (1997)
Current Playwright in Residence at the Alliance Theatre



KATORI HALL

Born: 1981
From: Memphis, TN
Education: Harvard University, MFA in Acting; Julliard School, Lila Acheson Wallace playwriting program
Awards: Pulitzer Prize Winner for *The Hot King Wing* (2021); Olivier Award for Best New Play for *The Mountaintop* (2010); Susan Smith Blackburn Prize for *Hurt Village* (2011)
Other notable works: *Pussy Valley* (2015); *TINA: The Tina Turner Musical* (2018), and TV series *P-Valley* (2020-); numerous articles and essays



ALICE CHILDRESS

Born: 1916 **Died:** 1994
From: Charleston, SC, raised in Harlem, NYC
Education: Did not attend college after dropping out of high school
Non-theatre award: ALA Best Young Adult Book of 1975 and Lewis Carroll Shelf Award (1975) for *A Hero Ain't Nothin' but a Sandwich*
Other notable works: *Florence* (1949); *Trouble in Mind* (1955); and numerous novels and children's books
1966-1968 Scholar-in-Residence at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Harvard University



ALESHEA HARRIS

Born: 1981
From: Military brat, based in Los Angeles
Education: California Institute of the Arts, MFA
Awards: two-time Susan Smith Blackburn Prize finalist, Pulitzer Prize for Drama finalist for *On Sugarland* (2023)
Play themes: myths of community, love, and violence; Black Life; Ancient Greek adaptations
Other notable works: *What To Send Up When It Goes Down* (2016); *Is God Is* (2018)

CELEBRATING WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

This March, the Rebecca Crown Library is celebrating Women's History Month by **displaying plays by Black American women**. Though DEI initiatives are being canceled and cut in government and business offices alike, the library remains one place users of all kinds can find both fictional stories and truthful information about America's culture and history. Black women have proven their unique and valuable understanding of American culture time and time again through writing about their lived experiences. Playwrights have an even larger hurdle as underrepresented artists compared to musicians, authors, and fine artists. Despite historically not having a space to perform or produce theatre, not receiving nominations for major awards, not being included in anthologies representing eras, genres, or styles, the playwrights seen here continue to hold up the artistic mirror reflecting American society of the past and present.



ADRIENNE KENNEDY

Born: 1931
From: Cleveland, OH, based in NYC
Education: Columbia University, MFA Creative Writing
Play genres: surrealism, expressionism, absurdism
Aleshea Harris on Kennedy: "[Her] work is a lighthouse, a liberating beacon reminding me that no structure, no mode of expression or subject matter is off limits to me as a dramatist."
Notable works: *Funnyhouse of a Negro* (1964); *The Alexander Plays* (1992)

Their plays cover topics that are wide ranging: Nottage highlights the effects of deindustrialization on a small community in *Sweat*; Bioh uses a Miss Universe pageant dream to discuss the consequences of colorism in *School Girls*; and in Hansberry's magnum opus, *A Raisin in the Sun*, an authentic Black family—the first on a Broadway stage—learns about what we lose when the American dream is consistently deferred. When combined with the intimate nature of live theatre, the playwrights seen here become powerful forces, asking necessary questions about how people—Americans—live, work, socialize and revolt.

In recent news, Donald Trump took over as President of the Kennedy Center, one of America's most renowned performing arts spaces located in Washington D.C. The White House press secretary noted Trump is, "devoted to rebuilding the Kennedy Center into a thriving and highly respected institution where all Americans, and visitors from around the world, can enjoy the arts with respect to America's great history and traditions." This is this administration's latest attempt to control American narratives, history, and culture. One way to resist this takeover is to read, perform, and celebrate the works of the women seen here.



CHISA HUTCHINSON

Born: 1980
From: Queens, NY
Education: New York University, MFA
Mentor: Lynn Nottage
On writing: "The best way to write a play about a social issue is to not make it about a social issue. [...] Just human shit."
Non-writing award: GLAAD Award Winner 2010
Other notable works: *She Likes Girls* (2008); *Amerikin* (2017); *Somebody's Daughter* (2018); *Proof of Love* (2019)
Staff Writer for Blue Man Group, 2012-13



LYNN NOTTAGE

Born: 1964
From: Brooklyn, NY
Education: Yale University, MFA
% of plays/musicals nominated for a major award: 71.4%
Only woman to win multiple Pulitzer Prizes for Drama, for *Ruined* (2009) and *Sweat* (2017)
Other notable works: *Intimate Apparel* (2003); *Fabulation, or the Re-Education of Undine* (2004); *By the Way, Meet Vera Stark* (2011); *Clyde's* (2021)
MacArthur Fellow Class of 2007



JOCELYN BIOH

Born: 1983
From: New York, NY
Education: Columbia University, MFA
Acting awards: Lucille Lortel Award nomination (2017) for her performance in *Everybody* by Jacobs-Jenkins
Notable works: *School Girls*; or, *The African Mean Girls Play* (2017); *Nollywood Dreams* (2021); *Jaja's African Hair Braiding* (2023)
Merry Wives was produced by The Public Theater's Shakespeare in the Park and streamed via PBS, 2021



LORRAINE HANSBERRY

Born: 1930 **Died:** 1965
From: Chicago, IL, based in Harlem, NY
Education: University of Wisconsin-Madison and The New School
First Black woman to have her play produced on a Broadway stage
Other notable works: *The Sign in Sidney Brunstein's Window* (1964); *Les Blancs* (1972); numerous articles and essays
 The Lillys created the **Lorraine Hansberry Initiative** to specifically assist and celebrate Black playwrights and playwrights of color



NTOZAKE SHANGE

Born: 1948 **Died:** 2018
From: Trenton, NJ, based in New York, NY
Education: University of Southern California, MA
Coined the term "choreopoem" to describe a combination of all forms of theater storytelling (text and speech and movement)
Notable works: *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide* (1975); *spell #7: Geechee jibaro* *Quik magic trance manual for technologically stressed third world people* (1979)



SUZAN-LORI PARKS

Born: 1963
From: Fort Knox, KY
Education: Mount Holyoke College, BA
First woman to win a Pulitzer Prize for Drama, 2002 for *Topdog/Underdog* (1999)
Side gigs: frontwoman of 6-piece band Sula and the Joyful Noise
Other notable works: *Venus* (1996); *The Book of Grace* (2010); and *Father Comes Home From the Wars, Parts 1, 2, and 3* (2014)
MacArthur Fellow Class of 2001