

School Libraries Should Restrict Students' Access to Controversial Books

Censorship, 2007

Laurie Taylor didn't set out to become a controversial public figure.

Yet, before she could say "hardcore porn made available to my young daughter," her concerns over sexually inappropriate books in Fayetteville's school libraries had made her an easy target. And now, this pixie-like and articulate Christian mother says she has been labeled by authentic extremists as everything from a "homophobe to a bigot, a vile pig and even a Nazi." The truth that few seem to understand is that she is, plain and simple, a reasonable, devoted mother who wants only to maintain informed and effective parental influence over her two children, ages 11 and 12. And despite suffering sustained public attacks, she's never advocated banning even one of the books she finds so appalling for children. Heck, she hasn't even asked that kids be prevented from reading them. Most excerpts I've seen from these publications amount to pornographic titillation the likes of which *Hustler* magazine might proudly publish.

Before I go any further and before you explode from indignant self-righteousness, read a few excerpts for yourself at wpaag.org. Decide if you'd want your children being provided this material without your knowledge at public school. Ask yourself whether a teacher would be dismissed for reading this same material aloud in class to seventh-graders. Ask whether your own child would be suspended for reading it aloud in a cafeteria. Inform yourself.

Parents Have the Right to Choose What Their Children Read

I admire Laurie, a former U.S. Navy diver. Her cause is selfless and noble. She has had the gall to insist that parents of all elementary, middle and high school-age children actually be informed when their children check out one of the more than 70 books that concern her. These would be books that speak in grossly inappropriate terms about promiscuous romps of all imaginable shapes and forms, including incest with both parents.

This outspoken taxpayer is asking for two simple things. First, she wants these books, many by the same repetitive-message authors, placed in a restricted section of the library. Then she wants the school to notify parents and get their consent when their children seek access to one of these books either in person or by an Internet request. That's it. Period. So just what, in this age of Internet filters and parental-consent for X-rated videogames and rental movies, is so "censoring" about that? What about that makes her a Nazi or a "Christian extremist"?

Someone had to decide which books would and wouldn't be included in the school library, right? Wasn't that process a form of censorship?

This issue is not remotely about one's religious or political beliefs or one's stance on constitutional rights. It is only about a parent's right to rear children in the way he or she believes is best without the state providing hidden, potentially corrupting influences.

What we really are talking about here is sheer common sense, providing information and one woman's refusal to bend or allow corruption of the moral values that she and her husband Mark have established in their home. That's un-American?

Nonetheless, Laurie finds herself standing at ground zero in the ongoing dispute with the Fayetteville School Board over how these exploitative books should be handled.

She has been vilified as some kind of anti-First Amendment subhuman bent on burning any anti-Christian books with which she disagrees. This is utter nonsense, a diversion from the real issue at hand. Meet her yourself. Invite her to your civic club. You will see.

Adults Should Use Good Judgment About What Kids Read

After reading excerpts of this "literature," which advocates open sex of various forms with no regard for potentially disastrous health and social consequences, I found myself wondering who initially selected these books as appropriate for children. Since no school library can offer every book published, the entire process of stocking one becomes a matter of priorities. Someone had to decide which books would and wouldn't be included in the school library, right? Wasn't that process a form of censorship?

I'd venture to say that 99.999 percent of parents and grandparents and citizens wouldn't want their 11-year-olds being exposed to the shock-slop I was reading earlier this week. Just because I might write a less than mediocre book that exploits the F word for gross shock value every other sentence and describes every possible sexual activity in detail doesn't mean it has to be available to kids on library shelves in the Fayetteville public school system, does it?

Do you think I could or would publish columns that spew expletives and celebrate promiscuity and deviant sexual behavior just to shock you? No, I wouldn't, and the paper wouldn't allow it. So does that mean I am censored from freely expressing myself? No, it means I'm expected to exercise proper judgment and responsibility in the way I express my views, especially where impressionable children are concerned. I will never condone book banning. Neither will Gulf War-era vet Laurie Taylor. Yes, I am well aware of the "slippery slope" arguments that are raised when humans try to restrict free expression. But there also have to be logical boundaries in our society. And I'm one who dearly values common sense as well as decency and taste when it comes to drawing reasonable lines for our children's sake.

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