

Banned Books

The important text below is taken directly from the American Library Association's (ALA) web site at <https://www.ala.org/advocacy/bbooks/banned>, based on its American Libraries Magazine's November 1, 2017 article entitled "50 Years of Intellectual Freedom," written by the Office of Intellectual Freedom(OIF) staff in celebration of the OIF's 50th anniversary.

"Banned Books Week [last week in September usually] was launched in the 1980s, a time of increased challenges, organized protests, and the *Island Trees School District v. Pico* (1982) Supreme Court case, which ruled that school officials can't ban books in libraries simply because of their content.

"Banned books were showcased at the 1982 American Booksellers Association (ABA) BookExpo America trade show in Anaheim, California. At the entrance to the convention center towered large, padlocked metal cages, with some 500 challenged books stacked inside and a large overhead sign cautioning that some people considered these books dangerous.

"Drawing on the success of the exhibit, ABA invited OIF Director Judith Krug to join a new initiative called Banned Books Week, along with the National Association of College Stores. The three organizations scrambled to put something together by the September show date and ended up distributing a news release and a publicity kit, hoping that with their combined membership of 50,000 people, they could continue to spark a conversation about banned books.

"The initiative took off. Institutions and stores hosted read-outs, and window displays morphed into literary graveyards or mysterious collections of brown-bagged books. Major news outlets such as PBS and the New York Times covered the event, and mayors and governors issued proclamations affirming the week."

"ALA is currently part of a national coalition to promote Banned Books Week, along with 14 other contributors and sponsors. Krug led the Banned Books Week efforts as OIF director until her unexpected death in 2009. Her legacy lives on in the Freedom to Read Foundation's Judith F. Krug Memorial Fund, a grant awarded to nonprofits to host Banned Books Week events.

"Today, Banned Books Week coverage by mainstream media reaches an estimated 2.8 billion readers, and more than 90,000 publishing industry and library subscribers. The Banned Books page remains one of the top two most popular pages on the ALA website."

It is important that the ALA stands in support of such threatened classics as Harper Lee's ever popular "To Kill a Mockingbird" and Toni Morrison's "The Bluest Eye." Lee won the Pulitzer Prize in fiction in 1961 for "Mockingbird," and Morrison, after this her

first novel, did so for “Beloved” in 1988; Morrison won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1993 for her body of work.

Seeking to ban books violates America’s core principles, and we should all appreciate that public Libraries and the American Library Association, among their many other contributions to American culture, stand with our constitutional core.

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