

Republicans Are Suddenly Banning Books--Here's Why

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As Daily Kos continues to cover, Republicans are more than happy to distract the general public from failures to lead amid the novel coronavirus pandemic. Hospitals filling up? Spew anti-trans rhetoric. People can't afford groceries? Don't let trans folks change their birth certificates! Thousands of people dying from COVID-19 every single day? Let's burn books.

And no, that isn't being dramatic. A truly concerning number of conservatives have jumped on the train of trying to get books banned from school and public libraries, if not outright calling for texts to be burned. Many of these books involve (or were created by) people of color and LGBTQ+ people. As reported by *The Guardian*, many of the people and groups pushing this anti-book mission along are connected to "deep-pocketed right-wing donors."

As the *Guardian* breaks down in an excellent, thorough deep-dive, you've likely seen these book ban stories framed as though it's just concerned parents or residents who are speaking up at school board meetings. In reality, groups that at first seem like they're local, grassroots efforts seem to actually be tied to—and backed by—conservative donors who carry some serious influence.

Moms for Liberty, for example, comes up. As the Guardian discovered, Moms for Liberty groups can be found on Parents Defending Education (PDE), and the groups wrote a joint letter to U.S. Education Secretary Miguel Cardona last spring. What about? Critical race theory, of course. PDE's website also encourages people to run for school board positions as conservatives.

The president of PDE? Nicole Neilly, who once worked at the Cato Institute and served as the executive director of the Independent Women's Forum. Cato, for the curious, is a right-wing think tank co-founded by none other than Charles Koch. Meanwhile, the vice president of PDE, Asra Nomani, has made time to rally against books on none other than Fox News.

If attacking books by and about marginalized people hasn't been an obvious enough mission, the ties between these seemingly local groups suggest a much bigger trickle-down of money, values, and influence. How many parents and teachers swept into this hysteria know this? It's hard, if not impossible, to accurately assess that. But for the students who are having valuable books taken from them, the outcome is the same.

At this point, we've seen Republican elected officials push anti-book bills in order to keep the work of LGBTQ folks and people of color from the hands of young readers. We've seen public librarians essentially threatened and harassed over keeping age-appropriate, diverse books on the shelves. We've seen conservative school board members try to get young readers tattled on to their parents for checking out LGBTQ+ books from the school library. It's sick, it's divisive, and it's pointless.

Make sure to check out the *Guardian*'s full deep-dive [here](#).

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