

FIGHTING FOR LIBRARIES IN TEXAS

Lessons for Quebec from Texas Freedom to Read Project



WHO ARE WE?

Texas Freedom to Read Project supports, connects and mobilizes parents and community members to fight for student rights and against censorship and book bans in Texas.



txftrp.org



[@txfreedomread.bsky.social](https://bsky.app/profile/txfreedomread)



[@txfreedomread](https://www.instagram.com/txfreedomread)



WHO ARE WE?



Co-Founders:

Anne Russey (Katy, Texas)

Laney Hawes (Keller, Texas)

Frank Strong (Austin, Texas)



WHAT DO WE DO?

- Uncover and publicize information regarding book removals in schools and public libraries.
- Inform voters about elections that affect the freedom to read.
- Train and organize parents to speak up at school board meetings and legislative committees.
- Amplify the voices of those affected by book bans.



WHAT DO WE DO?

IN PRACTICE, THAT MEANS:

- Writing letters to school boards/superintendents
- Submitting public information requests
- Testifying at the State Legislature
- Statewide & local training sessions for parents
- Helping to build resistance movements in individual communities: reaching out to locals, gathering information from librarians, teaching parents how to fight back.
- Social media, blogging, press
- Working with local & national partners (ACLU, SEAT, Authors Against Book Bans, Texas Freedom Network, Freedom Fighters, PEN America, NCAC)



MY STORY: How did I join this fight?



Context: What's going on with censorship now?

We are five years into a surge of restrictions on the spread of ideas that, if not unprecedented, is certainly larger than any we've experienced in the US in decades. Consider:

- There have been 22,810 instances of book banning in the US since July of 2021, according to PEN America's [October 2025 report](#). That's a dramatic reversal of the trend before 2020, when tracking organizations recorded the lowest number of book bans ever.
- In 2024-2025, there were 6,870 bans on nearly 4,000 unique titles. That second number is key, because pro-censorship groups often share lists and copy each other's challenges. A book banned in one district is likely to be challenged in others.
- These numbers are also likely **significant undercounts**.

MISCONCEPTIONS

- People think the movement to restrict books is **slowing down**. Instead, the battle has shifted, from big, showy battles at school board meetings over individual books to harder-to-track fights over policies and laws that are now affecting much larger lists of books.
- People think the book-banning movement is fueled by **parents angry at the books their children have been encountered**. In reality, most challenges are driven by outside groups circulating long lists of books from district to district.
- People think this fight is **limited to school libraries and classrooms**. It is not. The movement to ban books has moved to public libraries and even to questions of what books can be sold and to whom.

The State of the State: Where things stand in Texas now



In Texas, this surge has taken place in separate but overlapping waves:

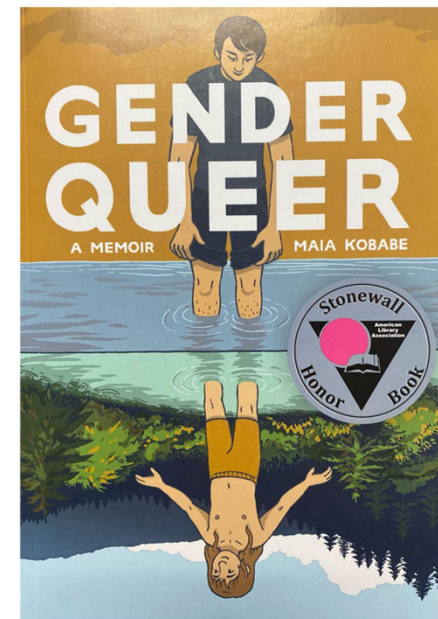
In 2021, outrage was focused on so-called “critical race theory” (HB 3979/SB 3, “[Matt Krause list](#)”)

In 2022, it morphed into “porn in schools,” with a focus on LGBTQ-related titles and sex ed books.

By 2023, organized groups like Moms for Liberty and Citizens Defending Freedom had learned to lobby school and public library boards to remove whole lists of books rather than individual titles, and pushed for changes in policies (and then laws) that would reshape whole libraries.

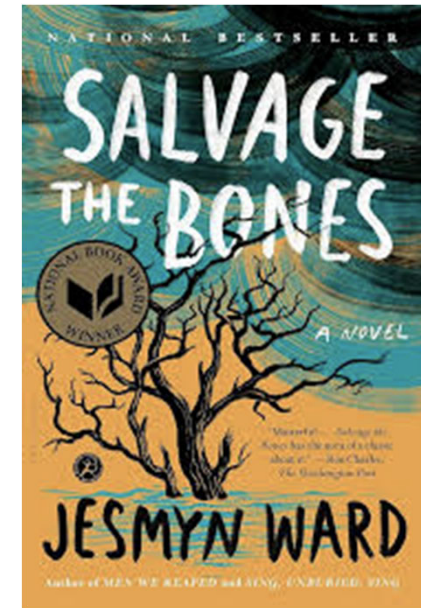
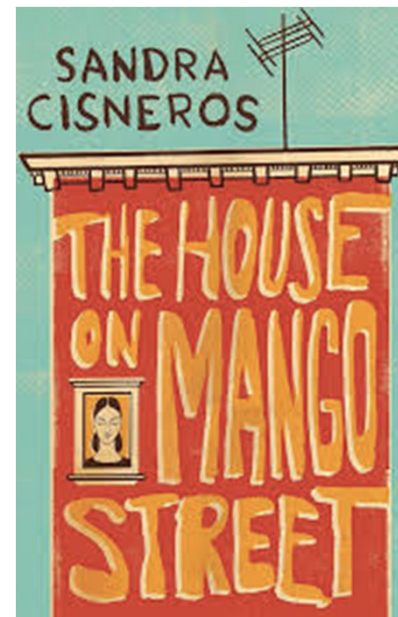
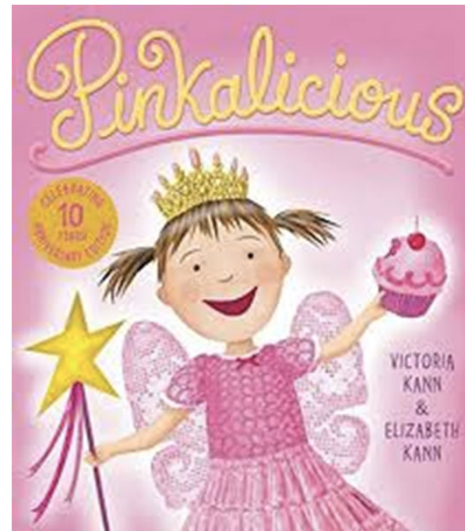
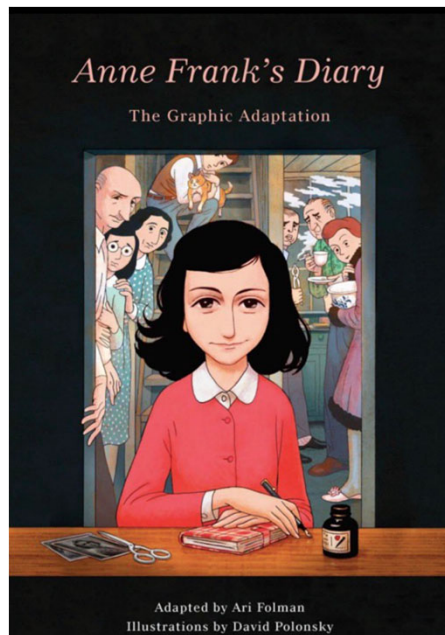
With the passage of Senate Bill 12 and Senate Bill 13 in 2025, school districts started using artificial intelligence to “audit” libraries for possibly controversial books. And the 5th Circuit’s decision in *Little v. Llano County* has amplified attacks on public libraries.

In each wave, books and authors representing marginalized communities bore the brunt of the attacks. The most frequently targeted books have tended to be relatively recent books, though plenty of “classics” have been caught up in the frenzy, too.



CLASSROOMS & SCHOOL LIBRARIES

Case studies & examples.



NEW BRAUNFELS INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

- **455 books** were flagged for “further review” using AI and pulled from shelves for most of the school year. **219** have been permanently removed; **35** remain under review.
- At the same time, **1500 books** (a separate list) have been removed from middle- and high-school libraries.



PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Case studies & examples.



LLANO COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY

The basics of the case:

- Local citizens challenged 17 books in the public library.
- When the librarian (Suzette Baker) refused to remove them, she was fired.
- The citizens who challenged the book were appointed to the library board, and then removed the books.
- A group of county residents, including Leila Green Little, sued the county to get the books returned to shelves.



Little v. Llanos and the future of Libraries in America.

“Government Speech” & its implications:

The Fifth Circuit rejected the argument that the removals violated the plaintiffs’ First Amendment right to receive information and held that a public library’s collection is protected “government speech” that is not subject to First Amendment challenge.

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- The U.S. Supreme Court chose not to hear the case on appeal, leaving the 5th Circuit’s ruling in place for Texas, Louisiana, and Mississippi.
 - The case has since been cited in a key ruling from the 8th Circuit Court of Appeals in Iowa, in arguments in cases in Florida and Tennessee, and in censorship battles in public libraries and school districts around Texas.
 - The idea of “government speech” is also shaping debates around public schools and universities.

FIGHTING BACK

Case studies & examples.



SALADO PUBLIC LIBRARY

- Books with LGBTQ themes have been facing attacks for the past two years.
- The elements that were present elsewhere in Texas showed up here, too: Social media attacks, political pressure from state lawmakers, etc.
- In December 2025, these attacks came to a head with hearing for the removal of *When Aiden Became a Brother*.
- The board voted 3-1 to keep the book in the collection.



ABILENE & SAN MARCOS SCHOOL DISTRICTS

- Parents in districts around the state are joining School Library Advisory Committees with the intention of *protecting* books from censorship.
- Regarding a mass challenge of books from Moms for Liberty, one parent in San Marcos Consolidated School District said, “Our role as a SLAC is to ‘ensure that local community values are reflected each school library catalog in the district. ... And as a longstanding member of this community there’s little I value more than the freedom to read.”
- A parent on the Abilene ISD SLAC said of *The Glass Castle*, “To me it is a book we *should* be having high school kids read.” And another said of *I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter*, “The content of this book *has* to be made available for adolescent Latina girls.”

Challenged Titles List: SMCID Website

File Edit View Insert Format Data Tools Extensions Help

100% View only

	A	B	C	D	E
47	Like A Love Story	Nazemain, Abdi	Middle School High School	10/17/25	Retain
48	Living Dead Girl	Scott, Elizabeth	High School	10/17/25	Retain
49	Man 'o War	McCarthy, Cory	High School	10/17/25	Retain
50	Milk and Honey	Kaur, Rupri	High School	10/17/25	Retain
51	People Kill People	Hopkins, Ellen	High School	10/17/25	Retain
52	Perfect	Hopkins, Ellen	High School	10/17/25	Retain
53	Red Hood	Arnold, Elana K	High School	10/17/25	Retain
54	Rumble	Hopkins, Ellen	High School	10/17/25	Retain
55	Shine	Myracle, Lauren	High School	10/17/25	Retain
56	Slaughterhouse-Five	Vonnegut, Kurt	High School	10/17/25	Retain
57	Suicide Notes from Beautiful Girls	Weingarten, Lynn	High School	10/17/25	Retain
58	The Carnival at Bray	Foley, Jessie Ann	High School	10/17/25	Retain
59	The Handmaid's Tale	Atwood, Margaret	High School	10/17/25	Retain
60	The Handmaid's Tale - Graphic Novel	Nault, Renee	High School	10/17/25	Retain
61	The Haters	Andrews, Jesse	High School	10/17/25	Retain
62	The Kite Runner	Hosseini, Khaled	High School	10/17/25	Retain
63	The Lovely Bones	Sebold, Alice	High School	10/17/25	Retain
64	Tilt	Hopkins, Ellen	High School	10/17/25	Retain
65	What Girls Are Made Of	Arnold, Elana K	High School	10/17/25	Retain
66	Wicked	Macguire, Gregory	Middle School	10/17/25	Retain
67	The Opposite of Innocent	Sones, Sonya	High School	11/6/25	Retain
68	A Stolen Life	Dugard, Jaycee	High School	11/6/25	Retain

SCHOOL BOARD ELECTIONS

Since 2023, school board candidates that have run on removing books from schools have generally fared poorly, and many elected in 2022 have either been ousted or chosen not to run for reelection.



KELLER

Keller ISD board of trustees shakeup: 'This was a change election'

More than 14,000 voters went to the polls to make their voices heard in the Keller ISD Board of Trustees Election

By Maria Guerrero • Published 60 mins ago • Updated 60 mins ago



Fort Bend ISD trustee election won by candidates who opposed controversial book and gender policies

Afshi Charania won a three-candidate race that included board vice president Rick Garcia, while Angie Wierzbicki won

Katy ISD voters oust conservative board president as newly elected trustee aims to eliminate politicization

James Cross, who beat incumbent board president Victor Perez in Saturday's election, spent more than 20 years in the school district serving in various

LESSONS AND CONCLUSIONS

- Organization matters.
- Resistance works.
- People support the freedom to read, but they need to be *informed*.
- Even in an uphill legal and political battle, book banning remains unpopular, and that is our most powerful weapon.



QUESTIONS?

