

# BANNED VOICES

## The Impact of Book Bans on LGBTQ+ Learning

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*Student Reporter*

In 2022, the American Library Association had documented 1,269 attempts to ban or restrict books. Almost half of the books banned were written by, for or about the LGBTQ+ community.

Between Jan. 1 and Aug. 31, 2023, there were 1,915 documented challenges to books. More than half of these unique titles pertained to the LGBTQ+ community.

With a number of LGTBQ+ students attending Amarillo College, people have expressed their concerns on the banning of these books. "Of course, I think whenever you take any piece of literature that has an educational purpose out of the hands of people who want to learn, that is a cause for concern," Micah Prock, Academic Success Center supervisor and AC Pride sponsor, said. "What's most concerning is the idea that there is something worth being censored in these books."

Prock said taking away these books is harmful to queer individuals. "I'm thinking of a kid who is grappling with the idea of coming out or feels alone in their sexuality or gender orien-

tation," she said. "Whenever we take essential learning out of this group of people's hands, they lose opportunities to learn about themselves, to learn about others in their community, and to have information that could potentially be affirming and in that similar vein, lifesaving. It helps them build that community they may desperately need."

Because books are a form of media, some believe these bans can affect other fields in the media industry. "It's hard because in the media, we obviously don't want to lose advertisers, we don't want to make a lot of waves sometimes because it's easier to keep everybody happy and appeased," Amy Presley, FM90 program director, said.

According to Presley, it is the responsibility of professionals to sometimes remain neutral in these situations. "But when it starts encroaching on people's lives and information that they're getting from these books, that's where it's hard as a broadcaster because you can't help but want to step in and voice your opinion," she said.

Director of Library, Emily Gilbert, said she believes in the freedom of information and having the abili-

ty to learn about the world in a safe way. According to Gilbert, books provide that safety and security. "I think being able to read about a variety of topics, a variety of experiences and a variety of cultures and perspectives through written word in the safety of your own home or somewhere you feel comfortable is something you can't experience anywhere else," she said.

Gilbert said that banning this genre of books would have negative repercussions, mostly dealing with the safety of the readers. "They may talk to somebody who doesn't have accurate information," she said. "They may seek out somebody who really isn't a safe person for them to be around. They may put themselves in dangerous situations so that they can get the information that they're looking for."

Prock said that any students who feel unsafe or nervous about the bans should remember that similar things have happened in the past. "I always think of the fact that we have fought these battles before and we've won," she said. "We've always come out on top and what needs to happen and what is right will ultimately prevail."

