

PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Cumberland County Library System Celebrates the Freedom to Read

Mechanicsburg, PA – The Cumberland County Library System joins libraries across the nation in the annual Banned Books Week (September 26 - October 2, 2021), an event celebrating the freedom to read. Spotlighting current and historical attempts to censor books in libraries and schools, the week brings together the entire book community — librarians, booksellers, publishers, journalists, teachers, and readers of all types — in shared support of the freedom to seek and to express ideas, even those some consider unorthodox or unpopular.

This year's theme is "Books Unite Us. Censorship Divides Us." Sharing stories important to us means sharing a part of ourselves. Books reach across boundaries and build connections between readers. Censorship, on the other hand, creates barriers.

"During this annual effort to spotlight the risk and dangers of censorship, the importance of free access to information, and our fundamental freedom to read, we reaffirm the commitment of the System and all of our member library locations to continue providing our patrons with uncensored access to library materials," said Carolyn Blatchley, Cumberland County Library System executive director.

The books featured during Banned Books Week have all been targeted for removal or restriction in libraries and schools. "By focusing on efforts across the country to remove or restrict access to books, this initiative draws national attention to the harms of censorship," added Blatchley.

The American Library Association Office for Intellectual Freedom tracked 156 challenges to library, school, and university materials and services in 2020. Of the 273 books that were targeted, included are the most challenged books:

- **George, by Alex Gino**
Challenged, banned, and restricted for LGBTQIA+ content, conflicting with a religious viewpoint, and not reflecting "the values of our community".
- **Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You, by Ibram X. Kendi and Jason Reynolds**

Banned and challenged because of author's public statements, and because of claims that the book contains "selective storytelling incidents" and does not encompass racism against all people.

- **All American Boys, by Jason Reynolds and Brendan Kiely**

Banned and challenged for profanity, drug use, and alcoholism, and because it was thought to promote anti-police views, contain divisive topics, and be "too much of a sensitive matter right now".

- **Speak, by Laurie Halse Anderson**

Banned, challenged, and restricted because it was thought to contain a political viewpoint and it was claimed to be biased against male students, and for the novel's inclusion of rape and profanity.

- **The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian, by Sherman Alexie**

Banned and challenged for profanity, sexual references, and allegations of sexual misconduct by the author.

- **Something Happened in Our Town: A Child's Story About Racial Injustice, by Marianne Celano, Marietta Collins, and Ann Hazzard, illustrated by Jennifer Zivoin**

Challenged for "divisive language" and because it was thought to promote anti-police views.

- **To Kill a Mockingbird, by Harper Lee**

Banned and challenged for racial slurs and their negative effect on students, featuring a "white savior" character, and its perception of the black experience.

- **Of Mice and Men, by John Steinbeck**

Banned and challenged for racial slurs and racist stereotypes, and their negative effect on students.

- **The Bluest Eye, by Toni Morrison**

Banned and challenged because it was considered sexually explicit and depicts child sexual abuse.

- **The Hate U Give, by Angie Thomas**

Challenged for profanity, and it was thought to promote an anti-police message.

Find all your reading materials at the Cumberland County Library System, which consists of seven federated local libraries, one branch facility, a system headquarters office, and an associated non-profit Foundation. The Library System provides support to its member libraries through information technology, securing library materials, older adult services, training opportunities, and administrative and financial services. More information on the Cumberland County Library System can be found at www.cumberlandcountylibraries.org.

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