

Censorship Challenge Report – Quarter 3 FY2012

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This quarter stands out for two special and different challenges, one of which has ended happily.

Happy news first. During the quarter I worked with author Stephen Chbosky's office, writing a letter in support of teaching his novel *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* so that Chbosky and others could appeal a Motion Picture Association of America rating of "R" on the film version of the novel (with an "R" rating, the film was insured of never being shown in schools). The good news is that in the end the appeal worked and *Perks* was given a "PG-13" rating.

The sad news that dominated the quarter was the elimination of a very successful Mexican American Studies program in the Tucson Unified School District along with most of the books used in it. The state of Arizona, shortly after passing Senate Bill 1070, the law that caused NCTE to pull its 2012 convention out of Phoenix, the state passed another law, House Bill 2281, which contains language prohibiting any courses that "advocate ethnic solidarity instead of the treatment of pupils as individuals." With this new law the Arizona Department of Education ruled that the Tucson Unified School District had to dismantle its Mexican American Studies program and cease using what were considered "suspect" books or forego \$15 million dollars in state aid annually. The district dismantled the program. NCTE joined with over 30 other groups and organizations in a "JOINT STATEMENT IN OPPOSITION TO BOOK CENSORSHIP IN THE TUCSON UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT (January 30, 2012)." See the statement and some of the news about this event on the website of the National Coalition Against Censorship at <http://www.ncac.org/Censorship-Arizona-Style>.

In addition to these two challenges, we fielded four others along with a request to fill out a high school student's survey on censorship (an offer we declined because the survey was skewed toward a view which was inconsistent with NCTE's belief in intellectual freedom). Two of the four challenges resulted in the books being retained (*The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian* and *Into the Wild*). Results are still unknown about two modern day classics being challenged: *Beloved* and *The Outsiders* (both the novel and the film).

As we close out this quarter, challenges to *The Hunger Games* are beginning to be reported—something that regularly happens when a movie is made of a book.

Below is a chart comparing the Quarter 3 FY2012 and the Quarter 3 FY2011 challenges and numbers of challenged texts. Below that is a list of the works challenged this quarter.

CENSORSHIP CHALLENGES COMPARISON Q3 FY12 AND Q3 FY11

A few things to know as you compare the numbers are the following:

- *Number of challenges = number of individuals who reported challenges.*
- *Number of works challenged is usually higher because often challenges involve more than one work.*

- *The Censorship Challenge Reports by quarter are posted on the NCTE website. See <http://www.ncte.org/action/anti-censorship/reports>*

January 2012	February 2012	March 2012	Q3FY2012 Totals
3 challenges/ 8+ texts	3 challenges/ 4 texts	0 challenges/ 1 request to fill out student interview	6 challenges/ 12+ texts / 1 request to fill out student interview
January 2011	February 2011	March 2011	Q3FY2011 Totals
2 challenges/2 texts	1 challenge/1 text	4 challenges / 4 texts / signed on 1 letter of support with NCAC and friends/1 request for interview	7 challenges / 7 texts / signed on 1 letter of support with NCAC

Listing of 3rd Quarter Challenges Reported January-March, 2012

7 Mexican American Studies Books (*Critical Race Theory* by Richard Delgado; *500 Years of Chicano History in Pictures* edited by Elizabeth Martinez; *Message to AZTLAN* by Rodolfo Corky Gonzales; *Chicano! The History of the Mexican Civil Rights Movement* by Arturo Rosales; *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos* by Rodolfo Acuna; *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* by Paulo Freire; *Rethinking Columbus: The Next 500 Years* edited by Bill Bigelow and Bob Peterson) (AZ). "Contained content promoting resentment toward a race or class of people." Joint statement with 27 other organizations: <http://www.ncac.org/Censorship-Arizona-Style>

The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian, Sherman Alexie (8th grade History class, MT). Sexual content and promote stereotypes. Parents want book removed from whole district. Sent rational, resources, letter of support. **Retained**

Beloved, Toni Morrison (seeking information, OH). Member of a group of parents who want book retained in the curriculum.

Into the Wild, Jon Krakauer (9th Grade Introduction to Literature, GA). Language. Sent rationale & resources. **Retained**

The Outsiders, S.E. Hinton novel and movie (7th grade, VA). Sex, violence, profanity, substance abuse. Sent rational & resources.

Perks of Being a Wallflower, Stephen Chbosky. Seeking statics to assist with MPAA rating of new movie. Sent rational, NCTE journal resources, support letter. **MPAA overturned R rating and Rated PG13**