



The Underground Library Free Thinkers Association

The Flagstaff Public Library as Propaganda Factory

A Case Study of Bias and Betrayal of the Public Trust – Purging Librarians Who Argue for Apolitical Work Environments

by Ron Kelley

*(This text, below, is excerpts from a book I am writing about the demise of the American library. **More here yet to come.**)*

As a librarian, for nine years, at the public library in Flagstaff, Arizona, I was recently fired for resisting the American Library Association's solicitation of librarians to join the Black Lives Matter movement. (Serving thousands of people on the library bookmobile, [See news articles [1](#), [2](#), [3](#)] there was NEVER a complaint against me). The post at a discussion group (of the Association of Bookmobile and Outreach Services) that got me fired I entitled "*Keep Politics Off This Discussion Group*," which is a supposed premise of my home library. My crime was arguing that position in the midst of the censorial and despotic "cancel culture" mania which is sweeping the country. I also posted a list of the works of dissenting Black (and other) dissenters to the hyper-political BLM movement. I even dared to mention that some of these Black authors believed that the "systemic racism charge was bogus." I also underscored that I endorsed none of the commentators I posted and that, once upon a time, offering diverse views for the public to make up its own mind about controversial issues was one of the purposes of a library. Sick of having political flags thrust

in my face, I concluded my long commentary by saying, *"I remind you that, amidst the current -- literally riotous -- hysteria and our collective memory lapse, this used to be the purpose of a library. Keep politics out of the workplace. Please go riot on your own time."*

I got fired for all this and a follow-up post (censored at the library discussion group) wherein I passionately defended myself, free speech, and alternative views against defamations (most since deleted by the moderator) against my character and reputation by "cancel culture" totalitarians at the commentary forum. Of course, we're not quite to the point (yet) where librarians can *overtly* get fired for heralding free speech and offering alternative opinions. Bad publicity. But we are getting close. In my case there was a conjured technicality: I was fired because cancel culture aficionados (welded to the ideology of "being offended" by virtually everything around them) complained about my posts to my home library and my comments were deemed to be "disrespectful" and "unprofessional." (This fake accusation alone at my former library is immense, I have city/library hypocrisies about this theme well documented, including the fraud of "unprofessionalism," and it would merit a long discussion beyond the scope of this commentary here).

One of the "free speech" organizations I contacted about my case was the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE). They were sympathetic to my plight, but are only able to aid college-related cases. I was provided a Fire-drafted assessment of the [state of free speech in America today](#), which included the following:

"In recent years, FIRE has witnessed a disturbing growth in incidents of public college students punished for failing to abide by general "professionalism" codes. In effect, administrators have begun using "professionalism" as a general catch-all provision to punish dissenting, unpopular, or simply unwanted student speech that they would otherwise be constitutionally prohibited from punishing."

My first introduction to today's ardent Thought Police agitators, in the library context, was when a flamboyant young man, with a guitar strapped on his back,

walked into my office at the library. I had no idea who he was. He introduced himself as a volunteer for another department and struck up a conversation. He seemed friendly and our short talk somehow skewed towards a discussion of book projects I had accomplished, before I was a librarian. Few librarians can match my resume in this regard. I had these volumes on the shelf above my desk. I'm proud of my list of accomplishments that center upon "diversity" and immigration. After a while, the stranger left. I never saw him again.

A few days later, the then-head of the library came over to warn that there had been a complaint filed against me. I knew nothing about it, but the grievance had already been forwarded up the bureaucratic chain to Human Resources. I was dumbfounded? Who complained about me? For what?

To my shock, it was the transient stranger who barged in my office and lingered there, the guy who invaded my space, the fellow who I met that one time in my life. He had apparently decided to quit his volunteer gig (he never showed up to the library again), and used me as his excuse. His note, passed to the library supervisor who guided his volunteer effort, said this:

"Well, yea. I would love to return tomorrow at a time when I might so able to avoid Ron's cultural insensitivities, his confusion about the difference between "ethnicity" and "religion," as well as his ignorance and bias towards specific religious groups." With solidarity, Hansel."

This was all nonsense, of course (coward that he was, he vanished before I could defend myself and challenge him), and the "solidarity" flag highlighted this guy as a kind of cartoon figure for the new "social justice warrior" motif. His main gripe, I later learned, was that I had dared to ask -- in the context of a discussion about immigration and ethnicity -- *"What's your ethnicity?"* In speaking to hundreds of people from across the world in my life, that question always seemed to hold an answer everyone liked sharing. No more, thanks to bitter politically-driven character assassins like "Hansel." Only later I learned that [this innocent question](#), in today's New Speak, was a Thought Crime, an alleged expression of "white supremacy." And only later I realized that this kind of stranger's real gripe was that I was a white male whose academic work was meaningless to him for that

very reason.

OVERT POLITICAL ADVOCACY IN THE LIBRARY WORK ENVIRONMENT

Flash forward to this year, when the head of circulation at the Flagstaff Public Library sent out an email to his staff with a seemingly wise directive. It said, in part:

“During the Leadership meeting today, we received a reminder from [the] new City Manager ... to be exceptionally careful not to discuss or present your political leanings in any instance while working for the City of Flagstaff. As many of you already know, this is an election year, and as such there will be extra scrutiny regarding any political discussions, support or statements by city/public employees or city accounts. As city employees, at no point should we ever disclose or advance our political leanings or preference while in a work-related situation or location.”

This admonition was followed up with an email to *all* library system employees from the head of a branch library:

“Everyone is reminded to be vigilant about keeping politics out of the library during this election year ... This is actually a very serious matter, because if a staff member were to be openly political on the job, they can be sued, and the fine would come out of their own pocket. Additionally, many supervisors up the chain could also be sued. The Leadership Team is in agreement that none of us have tens of thousands of dollars to spare, so we are all very invested in adherence to this policy.”

In Leftist circles (of which I was once a member), there has always been the notion that all sorts of prejudice (political and otherwise) is “naturalized,” ingrained, in our sociopolitical world. It is invisible, it is argued, because it is omnipresent and everyone takes it for granted. These days, however, libraries are becoming bastions of “progressive” activism and I doubt if I could find enough self-described “conservatives” among the dozens of employees at the Flagstaff

library and its branch to fill a thimble. In other words, per the accusation about a “naturalization” of sociopolitical prejudice, wherein most people don’t even notice the bias that surrounds them like air, the tables have emphatically turned.

Bizarrely, even as the “No politics” admonitions in the work place were circulated, no “library leader” (or apparently anyone else for that matter) publicly recognized, or perhaps were even capable of discerning, per the massive social engineering process we are all undergoing, a glaring infraction of this mandate under their very noses. (Or, given the current repressive climate, was this silence merely a consequence of a fear of speaking too freely, in daring to offer a different opinion in the face of The Sanctioned Narrative?)

Even as library managers passed along such memos, a large panel of text celebrating the current Left-wing Flagstaff mayor, Coral Evans, (college town) and her visage stared down at the circulation desk from about thirty feet away.

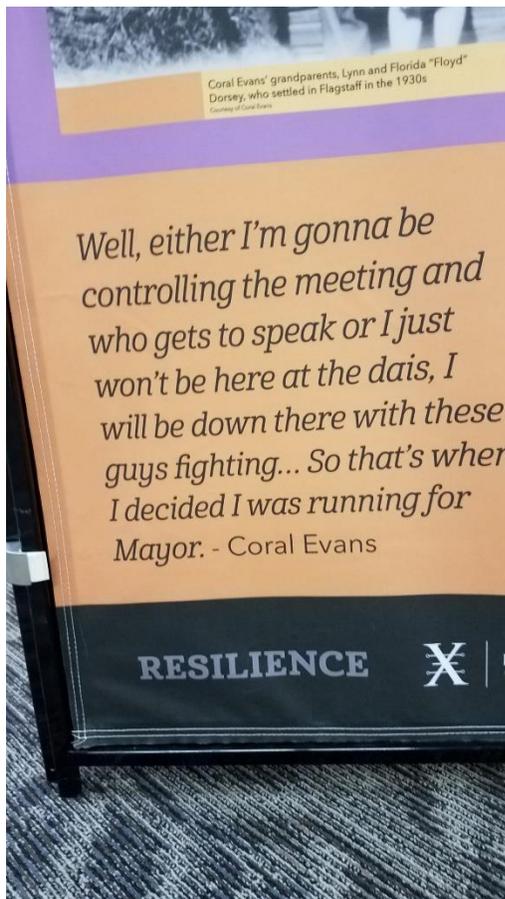


The display featured a huge photo of her and the words were fawning. It was essentially an advertisement. What did the display panel proclaim her essence to be? For one thing, in the critical vernacular of our ongoing Culture Wars, she was a “social justice warrior.”

“Coral Evan’s most notable impact on Flagstaff is her community activism and social justice work.”

The panel also sported – in very large type -- the following quote, regarding her efforts to become mayor and apparently her philosophy about free speech (and an implicit endorsement of the totalitarianism of “cancel culture”):

“Well, either I’m gonna be controlling the meeting and who gets to speak or I just won’t be here at the dais, I will be down there with these guys fighting ... So that’s when I decided I was running for mayor.” – Coral Evans [emphasis added]



And, incredibly, in stark defiance of the *Advocacy Politics Is Forbidden in the Library* statement, the local *Arizona Daily Sun*, [in reviewing this library exhibition](#),

noted the following:

“Evans is currently campaigning for a seat on Arizona’s Legislative District 6, a position that would place her in the Arizona House of Representatives.”

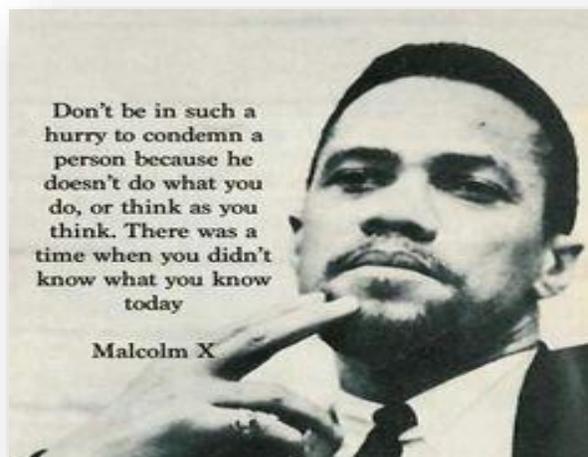
In other words, Coral Evans, the current mayor of the City of Flagstaff, which runs the library, was (is) an announced candidate for another political office! And a huge panel in a taxpayer-funded space was promoting her as a veritable goddess. Where, then, were Evan’s political opponents, the likes of, say, incumbent – and Republican, and who, like Evans, is also Black -- Walt Blackman? (Surely, based on my firing, I might stand to be dismissed for merely reporting that Blackman told a local newspaper Black Lives Matter was [“akin to a terrorist organization.”](#)) Why weren’t he and other Evans competitors afforded equal space and time in the library, to tell their own stories of “resilient” accomplishment? How can the library’s stance not be construed as politically promotional, displaying city/library bias – including space, funding, and energy -- towards Evans’ candidacy? Or forget Evans’ specific political opponents. The larger question looms: Why isn’t an alternative sociopolitical world view ever represented with such overt *advocacy* in the library, including the Flagstaff version, the way the so-called “progressive” politic *routinely* is?

In fact, Ms. Evans’s photo and story was part of a series of huge panels throughout the library featuring the heroic lives and ideologies of 21 “progressive” activists in a traveling exhibition called *“Resilience: Women in Flagstaff’s Past and Present.”* It was an assortment of Left-wing activist heroines (a couple bent to that theme), including an illegal alien, a “woman” who rejects that term and wants to be referred to as “bi” and them/they (not she/her), and the likes of two lesbians kissing in a huge photo near the entrance to the children’s area. Thematic subheadings for the exhibition reflected the usual progressive manifestos: Speaking for the Oppressed, Advocating with Passion, Living through Prejudice, Navigating a New World, Facing Adversity, Battling for Equality, Challenging the Narrative, and Healing through Activism. So not only was Evans political display highlighted, so was her entire ideological platform, as expressed by large library displays featuring twenty fellow ideologues.

Aside from Evans' presence being nakedly (albeit ignored) political, the semantic shell game about all this is, of course, that, in Diversity Think, none of this is actually "political" – it is dictatorially understood to be solely about fundamental human rights, and its gravity is thereby decreed to transcend ANY alternative view (including the once sacred "intellectual freedom") against Left-wing monologues, methodologies, and politically skewed goals about the sacred pillars of "diversity" and "social justice" (concepts that have increasingly been slanted towards a revolutionary totalitarianism against diversity of *thought* and any kind of justice that is fair to *everyone*. It is widely enforced now that even the benign "All lives matter" is henceforth a racist term.)

BLACK SUPREMACIST MALCOLM X AS "DIVERSITY" ICON

How ideologically suffocating and outrageously one-sided – to the point of virtual blindness -- does "diversity" get, in the context of public libraries? A while back I filed a formal complaint to Flagstaff's Human Resources department about the introduction (and attendant one-dimensional groupthink dictates) in a "transitions/diversity/tolerance" program for city employees (the library is a city department.) I also meticulously documented the "progressive" political platform that undergirded the city's "diversity" program). The Power Point lead-in was a quote by Malcolm X, famous former spokesman for the Black supremacist group, the Nation of Islam.



Don't be in such a hurry to condemn a person because he doesn't do what you do, or think as you think. There was a time when you didn't know what you know today

Malcolm X

In lengthy textual protest, I noted that, although the quote used was fairly innocuous, was it really wise to feature a diversity program with commentary of any sort by a man who believed, per Nation of Islam ideology, that the “white man was the devil” and the white race was invented by a mad scientist named Yacoob 6,000 years ago? Was it smart to highlight a diversity program with ANY words of a man who was the spokesperson for a Black supremacist organization, an organization that is still decried as “[hate group](#)” by the likes of the Southern Poverty Law Center and the Anti-Defamation League? Malcolm X was central in building the NOI to its popular recognition today.

And he was, of course, beyond “political” -- he was a revolutionary ideologue. Yes, he taught “social justice,” but he taught Black supremacism too. I also pointed out that if the city was insistent upon using such a man to lead a diversity program, our community’s supposedly “tolerant’ and “diverse” aims would be far better served by this quote with a stated authorship by El Hajj Malik El-Shabazz, which is the name Malcolm X chose later when he rejected Nation of Islam tenets and became a universalist (diversity-heralding) Sunni Muslim. (By the way, this man visited Mecca in Saudi Arabia in 1964 wherein he embraced his new Islamic – Sunni-style -- faith. One wonders if he realized that Saudi Arabia had formally banned slavery only two years earlier! Fellow Muslim state Mauritania didn’t ban it until 1980.)

My complaint to the city about Malcolm X was denied. Despite the facts, the City of Flagstaff would continue to use the designated Malcolm X brand label, adulated with the iconic likes of Che Guevara by the far Left. Why? As the official response from Human Resources stated: *““Given the ratings of the course and positive feedback from the participants we are choosing to maintain this quote as part of the training.”*

So somewhat similarly, if David Duke renounced his KKK past, as he supposedly has, and joined a Christian group and changed his name to, say, Jesus Jones, the city might use an inoffensive quote he once uttered, and credit it to the name “David Duke,” to begin a diversity program?

Not only did the city reject my complaint as groundless. *After the decision was made*, I was called before an Inquisition of five library and city overseers in the

“chain of command” above me. I argued for two hours, with a pile of relevant books about Malcolm X, the Nation of Islam, and the broader diversity and “identity politics” issues, for reference in front of me. The result? The top city bureaucrat present, Heidi Hansen (who was central in my firing), head of “Fiscal Vitality,” the city division that was inexplicably chosen to control the library, suggested to the others that perhaps my book selection duties as a librarian should be taken away. Why? Because ONE book (*The Rise of Victimhood Culture*, by two sociologists) referenced before me was a circulation selection I had made for the library.

To their credit, the two library officials present – including my immediate supervisor – rejected her effort, saying, no, that would be censorship, probably not a good idea for the reputation of a library. *At least in the past.*

How deep is the ethical hypocrisy endemic to the City of Flagstaff and its library and their politically correct propaganda in our current Culture Wars? Just yesterday I needed to drive to the downtown Flagstaff Post Office. Its address has always been on Agassiz Street, named after a famed naturalist who had influence in the area (one of the mountains – the second highest in the state -- overlooking Flagstaff is also named Agassiz). To my surprise, the road sign had been changed to “W.C. Riles.” I had no knowledge of the rationale for the sudden change, which – with Flagstaff a popular tourist area – would likely cause havoc for some with the simple question, “Where’s the Post Office?” But I immediately guessed the reason for the name conversion. Old Agassiz, a sinister white male born in Switzerland, must have said, or believed, [something unacceptable to today’s historical revisionism](#) and W.C. Riles surely was – in the omnipresent obligatory exchange game of our times – someone Black.

With a little research, yes, I discovered why the Flagstaff City Council decided that Agassiz Street had to go. But what name would replace him? No matter that any name under the sun could have been chosen to replace Agassiz Street. And no matter that only 2% of the city population is African-American and this is probably largely influenced by the temporary population influx of hyper-liberal Northern Arizona University. (In this political regard, note [these newsworthy politically-charged censorial incidents](#) on campus.) So, who was W.C. Riles? He was the first Black student at NAU, a man who rose to high educational leadership in another

state -- California. More power to him. Mr. Riles may have been the greatest educator on the planet and deserving of boatloads of accolades. But the essence of the street name change has nothing to do with Mr. Riles, whatever good he did in this world. His name on the sign represents a weak-kneed caving to the dictates and hypocrisies of political correctness. And, more ominously, the broader, political issue about this new street name is this:

How can this city purge Agassiz Street, based on Louis Agassiz's convictions about [polygenism](#) (today considered a genre of "white supremacy"), yet wholeheartedly endorse a parallel "supremacist," albeit a Black one, [Nation of Islam](#) spokesman [Malcolm X](#)? It is naked hypocrisy and emblematic of a core city betrayal of the public trust, caving to biased Left wing revolutionary race conventions of our time. Malcolm X was an anti-white racist. Malik El Shabazz, the same man reincarnated, was not. The City of Flagstaff cannot discern the difference. Or, in the wake of sociopolitical influences upon the city, cares not to.

DRAG QUEEN STORY HOUR

Another violation of the city's (and, hence, library's) own policies in service to Leftist advocacy was its [posted video](#) of a "drag queen story time" for children (an in-your-face Politically Correct Righteousness [endorsed](#) by the American Library Association). Not only did the Flagstaff City Library host an online video program (per the pandemic) by a drag queen for children, this individual was afforded the opportunity to beg for tips and hustle future drag queen business opportunities, both against the library's formal policy guidelines.

The drag queen [said this](#):

44:20: *I do this story time on my Facebook page if you'd like to do that, or I'm doing drive-through drag shows, so please leave a personal message if you would like me to come to your driveway. I can read you books, I can sing you songs, I can do dances, I'll be doing that on Sunday. Thank you very much. The price is free. Tips are adored. And if you'd like to tip me for this, yes, honey, this is my gift to you. I'm just volunteering for this – I love the*

library and I love child's lit and literacy. Keeping the lit in literacy! Thank you. If you'd like to tip me by [unclear], cash, or Paypal, for "Revelucien" -- like it's spelled right there. Honey, I'm not afraid of a few dollar bills ...

46:44 – *And yes. I will come to your driveway. That doesn't have anything to do with the library. That's me, that's not the library. But, yes, I do driveway drag shows. Thank you. Thank you.*

Never mind what you think about the merits of drag queen story hours for children. One of the cited reasons for my firing was that, in response to the cancel culture onslaught to my original post at the ABOS discussion forum, I entertained the idea of starting up a web site wherein librarians who were afraid to speak publicly could exchange ideas without fear of harassment or censorship. Although, unlike the drag queen's overt solicitation, my suggestion of a then nonexistent web presence would garner me no financial or personal gain in advancing the cause of free speech, this was declared to be a reason for firing me. Nakedly discriminatory and selective enforcement of library rules, anyone?

A few months after my firing, the director of the library, Jared Tolman, [gave a presentation](#) to the Flagstaff Public Library Board of Directors. Here he described how the public library was joining forces *with a local private enterprise*, a bookshop called Bookman's, to promote the drag queen ethic:

"June is pride month and we are collaborating with Bookman's to do a drag race story time. Council and City Hall have received a few emails and complaints from citizens ... We are helping promote the event and we are sharing the virtual links to the event as well. It will also be live streamed."

"The few emails and complaints from citizens" mean nothing to him in the library's efforts in co-sponsoring an implicitly sociopolitical event with a profit-making business.

Also, of note at this Board Meeting, a Deputy Director of the library, Richard Tutweiler, announced some changes in its throw-that-stuff-in-the-garbage policy, that *"Employees are to take cultural, local, diverse, and historical*

impacts in mind when choosing items for deselection.” “Deselection” is the disposal of existing books off the shelves, a discrete form of censorship, as anyone in Collection Development recognizes. Past grounds for such weeding were largely poor circulation or physically worn-out material. Now reasons to throw stuff in the garbage include keeping “cultural, local, diverse, and historical impacts in mind,” which is an open gateway for “progressive” library censors. Still further at this meeting, a comment from Kim Hensley-Owens, a member of the Library Board and a faculty member at the local university, *“request[ed] that the Circulation Policy use the singular they as a pronoun so we are using more neutral pronouns. Given the changes over the past few years, it makes more sense to use they/them pronouns consistently throughout the document instead of using his/her pronouns.”* Sure, this makes “more sense,” that library staff bend to a kind of authoritarian linguistic policing by bureaucratic overseers in homage to a subculture that has risen to dominate popular culture. (Grounds for firing, to make a mistake by calling the wrong person “him?”) Canadian professor Jordan Peterson rose to international fame by [resisting parallel steamroller dictates](#), and is a god or a pariah, depending on what your personal politics are.

How extreme does all this drag queen stuff get? What of the case at the public library in Orlando, Florida? After a Muslim terrorist dominated national news by murdering dozens in a local gay bar, the Orlando library leadership decided “the timing was right” to feature a regular drag queen performance (actually, “story readings” for children) at their facility. The theme was “*loving kindness and inclusion.*” In a story headlined, “*Drag Queen Story Hour to Celebrate Diversity on Anniversary of Pulse Shootings,*” the *Orlando Sentinel* [noted](#) the history of drag queen “story hours” for kids in various public libraries, and their growth:

“Drag queen story hours began in 2015 in San Francisco when writer Michelle Tea came up with the idea. She was promoting LGBT art and culture in the Castro district — the heart of the gay community — when she took her baby son to a garden-variety storytime at a library and decided to meld the two worlds ... Soon, libraries in [Brooklyn](#) and other New York City neighborhoods were hosting their

own rainbow-hued storytimes. The Harlem library plans to kick off its summer reading program with a drag queen story hour next month.”

Each drag queen story time person at the Orlando library children’s series “*will read a book with the themes of acceptance, diversity and anti-bullying.*”

“Themes of acceptance, diversity and anti-bullying?” The drag queen socialization of little children has also [spread](#) to the [Millenium Library](#) in Winnipeg, Canada (which “*stresses the positive impact of introducing gender exploration to children*”), the [Cherry Hill Public Library](#) in Philadelphia (the promotion of an in-house [LGBT “outreach” librarian](#), “a big fan of drag”), the [New York City Public Library](#) in Greenwich Village, and the Boston Public Library. The latter library’s [Facebook page](#) declared in June 2017 that

“We’re closing out #Pride Month today at the Boston Public Library with a Drag Queen Story Time at the [Children’s Library, Boston Public Library](#), featuring [The Boston Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence!](#)”

The LGBT History Project describes the San Francisco-based Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, with numerous geographical affiliates, as “*radical genderfuck*” artists and “*self-described 21st century nuns for the queer.*” “*The Sisters,*” continues the History Project, “*have been considered controversial by various members both within and outside the LGBT and queer communities but have received the harshest criticism for obvious parodies of Catholic icons and policies.*”

The “Sisters” have been controversial even WITHIN the LGBT community. Nonetheless, the Perpetual Indulgence group [declares](#) itself to be promoting “diversity” and aims to “*expose the forces of bigotry.*” And apparently the library world flows with that “diversity” façade. But the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights doesn’t see it that way. The CLRCR [noted](#) with outrage (featuring a report headlined “*Boston Public Library Promotes Bigotry*”) that such a bigoted anti-Catholic group shouldn’t be featured at a public library:

“The Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence is a tax-exempt group of homosexuals who dress as nuns. They have been mocking Catholic beliefs, teachings and practices

since they started in San Francisco on Easter Sunday, 1979. Now the publicly funded library of the City of Boston found it appropriate to celebrate the group's anti-Catholic bigotry, and welcome them to parade it before little children."

Celebrated national Perpetual Sisters of Indulgence accomplishments over the years [have included](#):

- * the "Most Outrageous" award at the San Francisco Gay Pride parade (with "nuns" astride a 40-foot penis)
- * a public exorcism of the Pope when he visited San Francisco
- * celebration of a "Condom Savior Consecration and Vow"
- * a demonstration outside the Capital Christian Center (in Sacramento, CA) during Easter Services
- * celebration of a "Virgin Queen" contest
- * involvement in a "dildo fashion show"
- * a gay pride parade float that had *"our own Pope Dementia in a cage where he could just barely reach out to fondle our young acolyte"*

The anti-Catholic mockery includes "nun" pseudonyms like "Sister GladAss of the Joyous Reserectum," "Mission Sister Hellen Wheels," and "Sister Tuna Noodle Cocktail."

So what is modern public library logic in socializing such nihilistic hedonism to elementary school children? Learning that she had won an American Library Association children's book award, the author of *This Day in June*, Gayle Pitman, [exulted](#) about the American Library Association and, among other things, its tacit support of the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence – in the secularly sacred name of "diversity":

*"The ALA had diversity on the radar screen this year – the Newbury and Caldecott Award winners were books with diverse content. And not only was *This Day in June* the first picture book to receive the award [this volume received the ALA's 2015 [Stonewall Children's and Young Adult Award](#)], it's a book that pushed the envelope in many ways. (It's not every day that you see children's picture books featuring drag, leather, and the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence.) The ALA sent a*

*message this year, and that message was this: **Get out of the box, and start taking diversity seriously.*** [Bold type in original]

“Diversity,” indeed – if you’re on the American Library Association’s sanctioned “transforming” side of the fence in America’s Culture Wars. Soon enough, the ALA was full force [on the side of “drag queen story hours”](#) in American libraries as one of its official “advocacies” within its “Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion” bureaucracy. And, yes, as noted, my (former) library in Flagstaff had its first drag queen story hour (online, per the coronavirus pandemic) in early summer of 2020.

The drag queen promotion in my home library harkens to the story told to me by a woman who worked in the children’s area at the library (recently retired), who said that a home school mom phoned the kids’ department to ask when all the LGBTQ posters were coming down so she come back to the library. Here, employee Left-wing sociopolitical activism literally prevented a local taxpayer from coming to the library. (Can we expect the National Rifle Association to be invited to the Flagstaff Library to host a program on 2nd Amendment rights any time soon? Or displays expressing the anti-abortion perspective? Or a conservative perspective of any sort?)

In the case of the home school mom, the facts are clear: the needs of sociopolitical activists in the library are considered more important than a mother who just wants books and not promotional propaganda that she wished to shield from her own kids.

Hostile work environment for someone not onboard with Left-wing totalitarianism? Hell yes. Now to the censorial avenue to fire me:

THE ASSOCIATION OF BOOKMOBILE AND OUTREACH SERVICES, AN AFFILIATE OF THE AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

I am (*was*) a member of an ABOS (Association of Bookmobile and Outreach Services) discussion group. One might imagine it is politically innocuous to deliver books to people in nursing homes, to the infirm and elderly, and to rural residents

who don't have a brick and mortar library. You imagine wrong. Recently, the current president of ABOS passed along to the group an American Library Association communiqué in support of the controversial Black Lives Matter movement, which included a link to one-sided information in buttressing BLM's ideological slant.

In 2020, there are many contesting views about the conviction that America's police departments are "systemically racist," including outspoken dissenters in the Black community, and I dared – open-minded librarian that I am -- to post some of them, underscoring that alternative views existed. Providing a range of ideas for people to make up their own minds about anything, including public policy, *was an important purpose of a librarian*. Or so I thought. My comments were forceful, it was informational, and it was under the heading "Keep Politics Out of the Library." Once upon a time the posting of alternative views about public issues might have been heralded by the ALA's own "Office of Intellectual Freedom." But not now. (I contacted this ALA division and its silence on a glaring case of intellectual freedom under its very prejudicial nose is deafening. I also sent an article to American Libraries magazine about my case. I haven't even received the courtesy of a reply in over four months. Library Journal, the other media monolith in the library world, rejected my piece in 8 minutes! It was enough for the editor there, Meredith Schwartz, to glance at my query letter to run from the subject.)

So what happened?

A little mob of ideologues, heeding the call of "social justice" from across the country, mustered to smear, libel, and ultimately censor me (the discussion forum leaders refused to post my rebuttal to such defamation.) I was exposed to the single-minded wrath of "progressive" totalitarians who robustly infest and patrol so deeply even in the most obscure backwaters of the library world. The first librarian to respond to my post decreed that if my words weren't deleted/censored, she would leave the discussion forum. (Dare we imagine what kinds of perspectives don't make her library's shelves?)

Despite the fact that I have a long demonstrable resume evidencing my commitment to "social justice" and "diversity," probably far deeper than anyone

else at the discussion forum, I was decreed to be “hateful” by more than one angry commentator, “dishonest,” and, perhaps laughable (except that I’m getting fired), slandered as “a mediocre white male.” The range of defamation was so severe that the moderator of the discussion group deleted them, yet left the commentary of a former ABOS president, Tina Williams, who declared that *“We stand against injustice and represent everyone. The voice of one person on an email listserv does not represent what we stand for ... Thank you to all who spoke up. I’m proud to work next to you.”* Yet all the extreme defamations were deleted so future viewers couldn’t see exactly what Ms. Williams was so “proud” to stand beside.

What is all this really about? How is it sanctioned, ethically or otherwise? This rush to censor me (and get me fired for not pulling the sanctioned ideological line) makes perverse sense in the context of what the modern library is becoming. The American Library Association even endorses a relatively new authoritarian concept, [“critical librarianship,”](#) a kind of Department of Truth idea, which expressly *advocates* for Leftist political causes in the library environment, i.e., in dealing with the public, librarians should advocate their ideological views in the work place. “Critical librarianship” is emphatically [against an even-handed objectivity](#), and abhors the aim of neutrality, especially in the “social justice” (i.e., political) context.

Lots of people who believe this stuff will be recommending your next book and making selections for their library shelves.

None of the defamatory quotes against me at the ABOS discussion were cited in my “dismissal” papers, of course, nor can I imagine those who fired me ever saw them. Nor were Flagstaff’s violations of its own rules in advocating “progressive” political causes mentioned. But there was this from someone who complained to my home library:

“This [my original post] is troubling, angering, and quite frankly not how I would think you want your library reflected within the greater library community.”

In truth, despite the siege against me at the ABOS discussion forum, a handful of librarians and library workers, likewise disgusted with what the library world is

becoming, took the risk to covertly contact me with words of support. Nearly all asked for anonymity, lest they be assailed, defamed, and perhaps even fired per my own dilemma. Who knows how many others sympathized with my post but feared comparable retaliation if their sympathies were known? Only one individual publicly defended my post at the discussion forum, but she was a *retired* librarian, and her job and career were not endangered by the precarious risk of free speech and opinion. She said, in part, this:

“Thank you very much for your posting about ALA stepping into the political arena and issuing these policy statements as if all librarians speak with one voice, in this case Black Lives Matter. I agree that ALA needs to stay out of taking political positions and focus on encouraging libraries to continue to be the information centers where people can come and learn of all viewpoints and make up their own minds about issues. If librarians on the job were to be out there advocating and vocalizing about Black Lives Matter, and making their library a promoter of this and other causes, this would be just plain inappropriate. The origins and purpose of the BLM organization are actually in dispute ...”

Perhaps the most noteworthy voice of support at the discussion group I received (all covertly) was from a “person of color.” I love this woman, she especially instills me hope that supporters of free speech and open debate aren’t extinct yet, and here, in part, is what she **secretly** conveyed to me:

Hi Ron,

I work in XXXXXXXXXX. When I read your email, it brought a huge smile to my face and it gave me hope that not everyone in the library world has been doctrine to think a certain way and push their views onto others. I don't understand the constant need to scream about how diverse we are. Its our job to serve our communities, no matter what race, religion, gender or non-gender you are. If we didn't we wouldn't have jobs, duh! Unfortunately, it's only going to get worse. My [spouse] is currently going to school to get [his/her] MLS and [he/she] tells me all the crap his professors push on them. [His/her] current professor told the class that she wished everyone would think the same. All in the same sentence while pushing diversity. I thought we were supposed to embrace our differences? ...

Working at a library and living in XXXXXXXX everyone automatically thinks you share the same views as them. They especially think this because of the color of my skin. Because I'm XXXXXXXX I'm suppose to think a certain way. That's a little racist, but I'll get over it. I know there will always be ignorant people out in the world.

Thank you for saying what I thought. I wish I could just go to work and not have to think about politics, but unfortunately I'm reminded about it everyday by the countless emails I receive about pushing a certain agenda and the collection of books being ordered and pushed on our patrons. My favorite is seeing all the children's books about activism. I know when I was 7, I couldn't stop thinking about social justice and wanting to march in the streets, not! I wouldn't have a problem with this if they wouldn't show their biases when ordering books for the collection ...

Thanks again Ron, and I hope you don't get hell for your email, even though it already looks like a few people have been "triggered" by your post. It seems we live in a world where you can only have free speech if you think a certain way. I guess that wouldn't be free speech then. Hmm...

Sorry for the long rant and if I said anything that might of upset you. I just wanted to let you know that I completely agree with you that we need to leave politics out of our work environment. No need to reply to this email and please discard after you read it. I don't want to be attacked for thinking for myself. Have a great day!

It's a wonderful email. But it comes from hidden shadows, like who knows how many others, wherein even librarians who file away Orwell's masterpieces all across the country are afraid to publicly speak.

MIKE SCHULL, "CANCEL CULTURE," AND THE THREAT OF RACIST CORN POPS

Good afternoon,

As a member of the Association of Bookmobile and Outreach Services (an affiliate of the American Library Association), I was surprised and frankly horrified to see the below e-mail pass through the ABOS list-serv this morning. It has certainly been addressed by several members in the last couple of hours acknowledging that “black lives matter” is not a political statement but a moral one, and pointing out that we are members of a diverse organization serving a diverse public.

Though I wouldn’t normally take the time to forward what I consider to be an extremely misinformed and misguided rant, I do feel that since this e-mail was sent by an employee of your library’s outreach department through library e-mail (on work time?), that it is worth bringing to your attention. Directing information professionals to dubious sources by extreme (and mostly discredited) voices like David Clarke, Candace Owens, and Jordan Peterson and concluding with, “Please go riot on your own time,” after receiving a straight-forward, ALA-sanctioned statement from the Office of Diversity, Literacy, and Outreach Services? This is troubling, angering, and quite frankly not how I would think you would want your library reflected within the greater library community.

Thank you.

-Mike

**Mike Schull, MLS
Outreach Manager
Hancock County Public Library**

(Indiana)

The above email was about my original ABOS discussion group posting and was sent to the director of my home library. The intention of the author was to censor me, expressly cause trouble in a disciplinary context, and perhaps get me fired. The formal “recommendation for dismissal” handed to me cites Mr. Schull’s last line above as evidence for my alleged failings as a librarian. This stranger’s commentary is noteworthy for a few other reasons. First, the man is a coward. In no way did he ever confront me personally to argue the merits of his belief system, or debate it in any context, public or private. Schull skulked and maneuvered in secret. I only know about his complaint because I filed a Freedom of Information request to the City of Flagstaff. Who, I wondered, lobbied to get me disciplined, or even fired? Mr. Schull was “horrified” at my post. I am more than horrified by his dictatorial absolutism and the fact that my library caved to it. What kinds of information, one wonders, makes Schull’s library shelves? And what material doesn’t, after he has dutifully filtered material, per his own suffocating sociopolitical ideology, for his library visitors?

Schull dictates that the “*black lives matter is not a political statement but a moral one.*” That would be news to the Black Lives Matter organization itself. (The official Black Lives Matter web site expressly [calls itself](#) “*a Black-centered **political will and movement building project.***” [Emphasis added] It even has a PAC – “[political action committee.](#)” A forthcoming book [argues](#) that it is an expressly Marxist organization.

The notion that “*black lives matter is not a political statement*” would also be surprising news to even some in the Black community. Most of these dissenters are framed within the “conservative” political posture, distinct from Liberal absolutism and convictions about race, and these people are routinely described as kooks by the political Left. (Schull’s more gently censorial terms for people who disagree with him are that they are “dubious” and “discredited.”) One of my Arizona state Congressmen, Walt Blackman, who, like all the following individuals in this paragraph is Black, has stated that BLM is “[a terrorist organization](#)” and that [it was](#) an “*ideology that goes against the very concepts and precepts of our*

principles in the United States." (BLM co-founder Patrisse Cullors has even [described herself](#) as a "trained Marxist.") Other Black voices dismiss the ideology of Black Lives Matter and sometimes reject its core "moral" assertion that "systemic racism" – especially from police -- is the central problem facing the Black community. Black dissenters to BLM include author and activist Candace Owens, talk show hosts Larry Elder and Jesse Lee Peterson, as well as scholars Shelby Steele, Walt Williams (who thinks growing anti-white sentiment is [a new racism](#)), and Thomas Sowell, all among others (a few more of whom I also referenced in my original ABOS post). Former Milwaukee County Sheriff David Clarke even called Black Lives Matter a "[hate group](#)." American presidential candidate Ben Carson [wrote](#) that *"the "BlackLivesMatter" movement is focused on the wrong targets, to the detriment of blacks who would like to see real change and to the benefit of its powerful white funders ..."* A Conservative Party politician in Great Britain, Ben Bradley, [noted that](#) *"Most of whom in my experience support a strong stance against racism, but don't support the divisive politics that comes with this [Black Lives Matter] campaign. Most people don't naturally see skin colour as a defining characteristic."*

Such a list could go on and on. This perspective is not the dominant one in enforced narratives about the Black Lives Matter movement, especially by most of the mass media and the political Left. In fact, it is largely muted and/or defamed, as Schull evidences in even his own library context. But, except for single-minded dictators like him (who demand that everyone believes what he believes), there is no "moral" consensus about what BLM really represents. And in a free society, and genuinely open library, *all* voices have a right to be heard.

Schull also decrees that BLM is not "political." This, of course, is a semantic shell game. (And the political Left has been heavily manipulating linguistic meanings these days). By that mandate, lobbying groups like the National Rifle Association aren't "political" either: they are merely seeking "social justice" in the second amendment context. By Schull's denuding of the term "political," lobbying groups like Black Lives Matter and the American Library Association aren't political either, despite the fact that they so fervently desire (and tirelessly propagandize) to "transform" our very *sociopolitical* world into something amendable to their "progressive" ideologies.

Thought Monitor Mike Schull also highlights (for smearing) three individuals who I posted as alternative views to understand the Black Lives Matter movement: David Clarke, Candace Owens, and Jordan Peterson. These, declares Schull, are “*dubious sources by extreme (and mostly discredited) voices.*” Discredited by whom? And who gets to decide what is an “extreme voice” is, in a library context or any other? And what if it is “extreme?” Galileo was once considered extreme too. What is the purpose of a library, anyway, if not to house diverse information for the public to make up their own minds about issues?

Dubious voice? Extreme voice? Candace Owen’s book (*Blackout. How Black America Can Make Its Second Escape from the Democrat Plantation*) was published by Simon and Schuster. In 2019, [Owens announced](#) that “*Last night my book earned a top-ten spot overall Amazon best-sellers, across all genres – surpassing Michelle Obama’s ‘Becoming.’*” “Extreme” voice David Clarke was elected multiple times to be the Milwaukee County Sheriff and had a book of his own: *Cop Under Fire: Moving Beyond Hashtags of Race, Crime, and Politics for a Better America*. Jordan Peterson? A *New York Times* opinion piece bantered about [the idea](#) that Peterson is “*the most influential public intellectual in the Western world.*”

Mike Schull doesn’t like these authors? So what? Pretend to be a librarian. Suck up your own dictatorial views, shut up, and put these people’s books on your shelf. *And don’t direct anyone to – or away --from them.*

Ideologues like Schull poise themselves to monitor the Gates of Information, mandating who exactly is a worthy legitimate “voice” and who is not. He is not alone. Far from it. Even at the ABOS list-serv one fellow comrade (Ed Miller at the Tulsa City-County Library) tore into my original post, also defaming the world view of Candace Owens, smearing her with an Adolf Hitler (!) association (“*Just off the top of my head, Candace Owens, for example, recently argued that the only problem with Adolf Hitler was that he was an internationalist*”) and decrying Milwaukee County Sheriff David Clarke as “*a notorious crank and conspiracy theorist. As a librarian, I would be ashamed to offer them up as thoughtful voices on any issue, much less one as important as anti-racism.*” Ashamed? I pity the likes of Schull and Miller. Lost to such totalitarian ideologues is the fact that the

purpose of a librarian shouldn't be to curate, monitor, and skew information, but TO FREELY PROVIDE A SPECTRUM OF DIVERSE OPINION for the public to make up its own mind, that a variety of sides be presented so that genuine debate and critical inquiry might honestly begin. That is democracy in action. Anything less is totalitarianism. Left wing or right wing, a Thought Police is a Thought Police.

Schull also decries my sinister audacity in subverting "*a straight-forward, ALA-sanctioned statement from the Office of Diversity, Literacy, and Outreach Services.*" There is nothing "straight-forward" about the ALA (American Library Association), as this book will evidence. It has long ago morphed into a far-Left propaganda agency and is central in today's corrosion of American libraries as a place to retrieve untainted information.

In his crescendo, Schull expressly states that my posting of alternative views about Black Lives matter is not in line with Accepted Dictates, that it is, for this political prima donna, my original post was "*troubling, angering, and quite frankly not how I would think you would want your library reflected within the greater library community.*" After all, infers Schull, a librarian at a public library is not supposed to represent the free world of ideas. It is supposed to espouse Political Dictate from Thought Central, particularly from the American Library Association. Flagstaff Public Library, your reputation is at stake in the community of lobotomized clones.

Schull also objected to the last sentence in my very long post: "Please go riot on your own time." I direct that comment to him, personally, here, again, with gusto. I don't believe, of course, that anyone is literally rioting about Black Lives Matter in their respective libraries. It is metaphor. And, in this sense, Schull is clearly one of the reckless rioters. His plea to my superiors is that my offensive (to him) post at ABOS needs disciplinary action: "*I do feel that since this e-mail was sent by an employee of your library's outreach department through library e-mail (on work time?), that it is worth bringing to your attention.*"

Schull writes his complaint to my library under the formal auspices of his Hancock County Public Library. (mschull@hcplibrary.org) His "riot" on behalf of Black Lives Matter is during his own job time. He realizes that his political view is the sanctioned narrative throughout much of the library world (and beyond) and he is

emboldened to attempt to censor alternative perspectives. In other words, Schull has the luxury of free speech on *his own* company time. And he recognizes that, because of the tidal wave of Sanctioned Thought sweeping our nation, there is likely not a free speech equivalency at my own library if I don't think what he thinks.

I could have used the word "agitate" instead of "riot," but I'm sure I would have borne the brunt of Schull's sense of "Holier-Than-Thou" entitlement anyway. The word "riot" fits. The likes of Schull, certainly in his backstabbing – strike and hide/run -- of a fellow librarian, is a kind of anarchistic rioter. My final "riot" comment came from a particularly exasperated spot in my soul, and I am not alone with this feeling: I am fed up with people waving their political (yes, *political*) flags in my face, intimidating me not to speak, telling me what to think, and then mandating that their political ideology isn't political at all, but a transcendent, irrefutable *morality*.

The other complaint about my post I discovered that was directed to my home library came from the current president of the Association for Bookmobile and Outreach Services, Cathy Zimmerman. Apparently, she phoned a library administrator at my home library, seeking to silence my views. Here is that administrator's email to my library superiors:

"I just got a call from Cathy Zimmerman the President of the Association of Bookmobiles and Outreach Services, she requested to speak to the library director regarding Ron. She did not give me a lot of detail but did say that he was "tearing up her listserv" and "threatening to sue the Association". I don't know any more than that, but I told her I would send her information to the two of you. She would like a call back ASAP."

Zimmerman actually emailed the following to Allison Trautman, a librarian who publicly declared that if my original post wasn't censored, she would leave the list-serv.

*Allison,
I appreciate your patience. I do not think that Outreach in general shares his views. We spend too much time serving those who are in need. He has been moderated on the listserv. And I see that many outreach folks are not happy with*

him for his "rant" ... ABOS does not support Mr Kelley's view. I would ask that you be tolerant right now while we work on the issue he has created on this listserv."

Who says ABOS has to "support my view?" Its role as an (supposed) open forum should be not to dictate anything, but let librarians decide for themselves what is so, *when provided a full range of information.*

So the series of events lines up like this: I posted alternative views to the ALA's solicitation at the ABOS discussion group to join Black Lives Matter. A group of ideologues then personally defamed and libeled me at the discussion forum. (Some were so offensive that the moderator deleted them). I followed up with a long defense of free speech (and my reputation) which I tried to post at the ABOS forum. I mentioned that my response should be posted, or I might investigate legal action. This text was censored by Cathy Zimmerman and the ABOS discussion group moderator. Hence, I was never allowed to defend myself, my notion of what a library should be, freedom of speech, and my personal integrity. To my surprise, as I discovered via the Freedom of Information Act request, ABOS "Executive Board" had scrambled to silence me behind the scenes. Cross-continently, these people held an "Uber call" to discuss my posts (the second one censored). One email commentator, Brooke Bahnsen, the ABOS treasurer, said this: *"Yes, I am available at 7:30pm. You can also turn "recording off" in the UberConference mode - so we can talk freely."*

What, one wonders, did these people have to hide? "Freely," indeed. A concept which I have been denied in struggling to reach other librarians with my own commentary.

ABOS leadership went out of its way to stifle and persecute me. But, judging by what I found from the City of Flagstaff, thanks to the Freedom of Information Act, of the hundreds of people probably on the ABOS discussion forum, Mr. Schull's complaint was the only such out-of-the-way attempt at censorship (and punishment) from the ABOS rank-and-file. In this regard, Mr. Schull mirrors the censorial power of a single individual in our new Identity Politics Victimhood Culture, lionized in the notorious "Corn Pop Complaint."

In that case, ONE person, Saladin Ahmed, drafted [a complaint on social media to](#)

[the Kellogg's cereal company](#) about cartoon artwork on its Corn Pops box. Ahmed perceived that one of the corn pops, a janitor, was dark-colored. He therefore decided that “the illustration was teaching racism.” (And if the corn pop janitor was white, one wonders, what does that signify? Would it be taken down? I’ve worked as a janitor. And all this begs the question: what color should the janitor corn pop be? Is it better that Kellogg’s doesn’t represent that strata of occupation called janitors? But, alas, wouldn’t such an excising be discrimination – and disrespect -- against them?) Alert to this grievance, *within five hours*, the Kellogg’s company announced that it would redesign its cereal cartoon.

All such declared offense, from the world of racist corn pops to Mike Schull, and the aim to erase/censor virtually anything that is conjured to be offensive to “progressive” dictate, is central to today’s Identity Politics victimhood obsession and its intolerant censorial wing, that which has become recently known as “cancel culture.”

Cancel culture is a new, largely far Leftist strategy construed to nakedly block, censor, and “cancel” alternative voices from being heard. Some of those authors cited in my original ABOS posting have been subject to such attempts at suppression (authoritarian protest mobs have tried to disrupt and “cancel” university lectures by Heather McDonald and Jordan Peterson, for example.) In the broader social context, this dangerous phenomenon has even been publicly assailed via two newsworthy items during the timeframe of my firing process:

Bari Weiss, the Opinion Editor for the *New York Times*, resigned [with a blistering commentary](#) about coworker and workplace political totalitarianism:

“If a person’s ideology is in keeping with the new orthodoxy, they and their work remain unscrutinized. Everyone else lives in fear of the digital thunderdome. Online venom is excused so long as it is directed at the proper targets. Op-eds that would have easily been published just two years ago would now get an editor or a writer in serious trouble, if not fired. If a piece is perceived as likely to inspire backlash internally or on social media, the editor or writer avoids pitching it. If she feels strongly enough to suggest it, she is quickly steered to safer ground. And if, every now and then, she succeeds in getting a piece published that does not

explicitly promote progressive causes, it happens only after every line is carefully massaged, negotiated and caveated.”

Likewise making international news, the liberal *Harper's* magazine published “[A Letter on Justice and Open Debate](#)” featuring over 150 prominent “progressive” signees who agreed that

“The free exchange of information and ideas, the lifeblood of a liberal society, is daily becoming more constricted. While we have come to expect this on the radical right, censoriousness is also spreading more widely in our culture: an intolerance of opposing views, a vogue for public shaming and ostracism, and the tendency to dissolve complex policy issues in a blinding moral certainty. We uphold the value of robust and even caustic counter-speech from all quarters. But it is now all too common to hear calls for swift and severe retribution in response to perceived transgressions of speech and thought.”

In defining cancel culture, one online dictionary [suggests that](#) “a variety of earlier slang senses of cancel can be found reaching into the 1990s ... The spread of this slang sense is commonly credited to [Black Twitter](#) [‘the collective identity of black users on Twitter’]. in the mid-2010s, which often used cancel about issues of discrimination and racism.”

“Cancel culture” is, of course, a euphemism. It is Censorship Culture, or Repression Culture, prelude to the destruction of free speech democracies. And America’s information retrieval system is not immune to this repressive “cancel culture” phenomenon. It is here, it is growing, and, greased by the American Library Association, it is coming to a library near you.