

BANNED BOOKS, BANNED BELIEFS

You may have heard about the dramatic increase in efforts to ban books in our nation's schools and libraries. Many of the targeted books are by or about historically marginalized groups, particularly LGBTQIA+ and Black communities. But did you know that books are also being challenged and banned because they are by authors or feature characters from Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, and other minority faith traditions?

Censorship is an attack on our First Amendment rights, including the freedom of religion. It threatens people of diverse faiths and beliefs. **People of faith must come together to stand up to book bans.**

When religion becomes a weapon

Unfortunately, some of those who want to ban books use religion as a cover for their attempts to shut down the freedom to read. If successful, they could silence diverse religious voices and traditions that are a vital part of our rich social fabric.

Censorship groups are well organized. They know how to target local school boards, state legislatures,

and the federal government, and their efforts have resulted in the removal of thousands of titles from public libraries and classrooms. But they do not represent the majority of people from our diverse religious communities.

How religion can be a solution

People of faith often lead movements for justice, equality, and democracy. We are now called to join the battle against censorship. The following are straightforward actions faith community members can take.

Mobilize your congregation. Congregations are people, and people are power. Organize your community in initiatives to support the right to read. Share events and resources through social media (download free images at bit.ly/uabb-social), message boards, and newsletters.

Be a voice for broader acceptance. Religious leaders can play an important role in framing moral issues by offering sermons and study groups on censorship that help people of faith understand why book bans are bad for religion and bad for our communities. Faith leaders can also reach out to local interfaith organizations to collaborate on the issue. The Unite Against Book Bans talking points and FAQs at bit.ly/uabb-talkingpoints can help.

Paint the bigger picture. Help others understand the connection between banned books and

banned beliefs. Whatever your personal background or identity, the threat to diverse viewpoints and the freedom of belief remains the same.

Monitor school and library board happenings and get involved. Show up to public meetings, oppose censorship, and let people know that you are a member of a religious or interfaith community. Your presence can counter the idea that anyone using religion to justify book bans speaks for all people of faith. Remember that many of the librarians who have been targeted are feeling alone and vulnerable—offer a kind word to them! Prepare by using the Unite Against Book Bans guide for attending board meetings at bit.ly/uabb-meetings.



Engage in local elections. Book bans and the ability to choose what to read are heavily influenced by local and state elections. These elections have lower voter turnout than federal elections, yet the results have a significant impact on your rights. Ask candidates to take the Unite Against Book Bans Candidate Pledge to Oppose Book Bans at bit.ly/uabb-pledge.

Join us to stay engaged

Interfaith Alliance is a key partner to Unite Against Book Bans. All across America, people of all beliefs and faiths are saying no to censorship and yes to the freedom to read. Our supporters are our strength as this struggle continues.



Sign up to be an ongoing partner in this work at uniteagainstbookbans.org/take-action/



Learn more about Interfaith Alliance's work against censorship at interfaithalliance.org/freedom-to-read