



United Against Book Bans Resolution

Approved by a vote of the JCRC at the April 24, 2023 meeting.

The American Library Association reported 1,269 attempts to censor library books and resources in 2022, the highest number of attempted book bans since ALA began compiling data about censorship in libraries more than 20 years ago.

Jewish reasoning for opposing state and local book bans is rooted in a number of core values and beliefs that are central to Jewish tradition and culture. Some of these reasons include:

1. **Respect for knowledge and learning:** Judaism places a high value on knowledge and learning. Jewish tradition emphasizes the importance of studying and questioning, and recognizes the power of education to transform individuals and society. Book bans represent a threat to this value by limiting access to information and ideas.
2. **Commitment to freedom of expression:** Judaism has a long tradition of valuing freedom of expression and resisting censorship. Jewish history is full of examples of Jews who spoke out against oppression and challenged the status quo. Book bans represent a form of censorship that runs counter to Jewish values of free speech and expression.
3. **Resistance to oppression:** Jewish history is also marked by periods of oppression and persecution. Throughout these periods, Jews have resisted efforts to silence them and have worked to preserve their culture and identity. Book bans can be seen as part of a larger pattern of oppression and as a threat to Jewish culture and identity.
4. **Embrace of diversity and pluralism:** Jewish tradition recognizes the value of diversity and pluralism. Jews have historically lived in many different cultures and have been influenced by a wide range of ideas and perspectives. Book bans represent a narrow, one-sided view of the world that runs counter to Jewish values of tolerance and understanding.

Therefore, it is antithetical to Jewish values to ban books, as such a policy would be contrary to our fundamental beliefs and practices. The banning of books limits the pursuit of knowledge and the exploration of new ideas, which are essential to Jewish learning and scholarship.

Furthermore, the Jewish tradition teaches us to approach even controversial or challenging ideas with an open mind and a willingness to engage with them thoughtfully and critically. The

Talmud instructs us to "seek out the truth from whoever says it" (Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 23a), and to engage in respectful debate and discussion with those who hold differing viewpoints.

Banning books also runs counter to Jewish cultural values, which have historically been characterized by a deep appreciation for the power of the written word. From the Torah to the Talmud to contemporary Jewish literature, the written word has always been central to Jewish life and culture. Banning books would therefore represent a serious affront to Jewish cultural heritage.

As a Jewish community, we stand firm in our commitment to the pursuit of knowledge and the free exchange of ideas. We must resist any attempts to ban books or limit access to information, as such actions run counter to our most deeply held beliefs and practices.

Therefore, the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater New Orleans supports taking the following action steps:

- Speak out publicly against book bans and advocate for the protection of the freedom to read.
- Educate the Jewish community, the general public and public officials about the importance of free and open access to information, and the dangers of book banning.
- Advocate for legislative and administrative action at the local and state level that protects intellectual freedom and access to information.
- Build or join coalitions with other organizations and individuals who share a commitment to opposing book bans.
- Monitor and respond to instances of book banning and censorship in the community, and take action to oppose these efforts.