

THE SURPRISING BUSINESS OF THE AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

By: Steve Baldwin

Usually, donations flow from affluent areas to charitable organizations. Therefore, the recent unannounced donation of \$5,000 from the American Library Association (ALA) to Highland Park neighborhood group HP Kids Read was surprising.

Controversies over books in schools have been around for decades, but a new round of protests by parents is breaking out around the country. With the introduction of a new genre of literature, this battle has taken some new twists as well, as the ALA has inserted its national agenda into local communities through actions like their donation to HP Kids Read* and their input into proposed changes in Highland Park ISD literature policies.**

Unbeknownst to most people, a new wave of literature called "authentic literature" hit our public school libraries over the last few years. The ALA claims such books portray American life and culture in a more realistic fashion. But they don't. These books feature druggies, sex addicts, pedophiles, gang members and others on the fringes of society. Increasingly, this literature is replacing the traditional literature classics, which, in general, promoted mainstream American values or at least didn't undermine them.

The authentic literature books are rife with profanity and are dominated by themes of death, crime, drug addiction, rapes, gang beatings, deviant sex, and so on. Shockingly, many of them violate state obscenity laws and even school district age appropriate regulations. I've collected excerpts from hundreds of such books that are often assigned by teachers as mandatory reading assignments.

Naturally, parent groups have formed to protest such books, and many have put up websites with excerpts, but much of it is too graphic for me to repeat here. The books that used to inspire -- that celebrated American values and chronicled the exploits of trailblazers, astronauts, soldiers, and other heroes -- are fast disappearing.

The ALA's influence on book selections in schools is biased against a conservative perspective, which is having an enormous impact on our culture, our value system and our youth. Furthermore, the ALA has staked out positions well to the left of the mainstream. They join forces with likeminded liberal groups such as American for Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and People for the American Way to advance their shared goals. ***

In 2003, the ALA, with support from the ACLU and others, fought a case all the way to the Supreme Court to argue *against* filters on library computers that would prevent adult and child patrons from accessing

materials considered obscene, child pornography, or "harmful to minors." Judith Krug, the de facto leader of the ALA at the time, said, "Blocking material leads to censorship. That goes for pornography and bestiality, too. If you don't like it, don't look at it ... Every time I hear someone say, I want to protect the children, I want to pull my hair out." **** Thankfully, in a 6-3 ruling, the Supreme Court disagreed with the ALA.

Ironically, despite the shrill cry of censorship one constantly hears emanating from the ALA, the biggest censor in America today is the ALA. Schools with limited budgets make decisions every day as to which books to purchase or not to purchase. Such decisions are often based on recommendations from the ALA, which targets classroom teachers with press releases promoting certain books.

The idea that our Founding Fathers wrote the First Amendment to allow children to view obscene literature is preposterous. Furthermore, it has become increasingly clear that the ALA is really not so much dedicated to defending the First Amendment as it is to challenging America's underlying value system. It's time to acknowledge that the American Library Association has changed.

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California Assembly Education Committee)

* Have email documenting donation

** ALA input into HPISD proposed literature policies described by HPHS Principal Walter Kelly at HPISD public Board meeting on Dec. 9, 2014

*** http://ifea.net/joint_statement_9_98.html

**** <http://quotes.yourdictionary.com/bestiality>
AND http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Judith_Krug AND
"Preventing Kids From Seeing Illegal Smut Is Not Unconstitutional; It's Common Sense," by **Janet M. LaRue**, Senior Director of Legal Studies at the Family Research Council, *National Policy Center: Idea House* (2001).