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The Latest from the Misinformed Public

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Posted by [Maria Hanrahan](#) at 04:32 PM on May 15, 2009

Since certain other bloggers are so prone to calling others that don't agree with them "misinformed," I thought it would be prudent to point out some misinformation recently made public by some supporters of WBCFSL.

Randy Marquardt, in a letter to the Daily News, writes: "The controversy started when certain books (that are objectionable to many) were featured as recommended reading on the YA page of the Website. Someone chose to select and feature them ? supposedly the youth librarian, who answers to the director, who answers to the Library Board." If Marquardt is referring to the "Out of the Closet" booklist category that Ginny Maziarka originally asked to be removed, he is wrong. Booklists are not necessarily recommendations; they are selected lists of books, usually on a specific topic or in a particular genre, arranged in some kind of order (by author, title, subject, theme, etc.), that may include brief descriptive annotations, used mainly in readers' advisory. They help readers (in the case of the West Bend library website, YA library patrons) to find books that have a similar theme, along the lines of "if you like this book/this topic/this theme, maybe you'll like these, too." Maziarka would like people to think the booklist in question is a list of books based on sexual content, but in truth it is a list of books featuring plots or characters concerning a specific sexual orientation. That is the real reason for the complaint and therein lies the rub for Maziarka.

I'd also like to point out that even if certain books are objectionable to many area residents, they are also NOT objectionable and quite valuable to many. Therefore, the only way to truly address the issue of whether or not certain books are appropriate for children is to leave that decision in the hands of the parents, who get to decide that for their children and no one else's.

In her signing of the WBCFSL online petition, Karen Hollingsworth notes, "Trying to inflame the issue does not change the truth of the facts. Pornography as defined by our laws does NOT belong in our library at all. Attacking us and subverting what we are proposing makes me wonder just who is the one who is perpetuating the injustice here? I am not trying to impose my values on anyone else or their children, conversely, where is my respect? Truth, common sense, decency and obedience of our laws must prevail." Nice note, Ms. Hollingsworth. Unfortunately, it does not apply at all to this situation:

1) No one in our group, the most public in speaking out against the WBCFSL petition, has inflamed the issue or made personal attacks.

2) The material in question categorically DOES NOT meet any legal definition of pornography (the legal term is actually obscenity.)

3) Endorsement of the WBCFSL petition DOES impose values on others, as it asks for changes to policies concerning how material is categorized and shelved, based on someone's subjective opinion concerning sexual or other content in the book.

4) Obedience of our laws prevails with the current library policies in place. Changing them to the degree that WBCFSL asks would infringe upon the First Amendment rights of other citizens/library patrons.

West Bend Parents for Free Speech doesn't want to push any books on anyone that is not interested in them or does not find them valuable. We do, however, want to preserve our rights as parents and library patrons to be the decision makers about what is appropriate for our kids and what isn't. We don't want the library staff, library board, an individual or a citizens' group telling us what is best for our children. And we do not want censorship of any kind (including the potential to move books to make them less accessible to a group of library patrons) of the materials at the library.