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Concerned West Bend Citizen

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Saturday, May 2, 2009

[Ridiculous Lawsuit Demands Destruction of "Baby Be-Bop", \\$120K, Resignation of Mayor](#)

The Milwaukee branch of the Christian Civil Liberties Union [has filed a legal claim](#) against the the city of West Bend, Mayor Kristine Deiss, the West Bend Library Board and Library Director Michael Tyree, arguing that the young adult book [Baby Be-Bop](#) includes words that "are derogatory and slanderous to all males, and dangerously offensive and disrespectful to all people" and that "can permeate violence, and puts one's life in possible jeopardy, adults and children alike". The claim demands the destruction of the book, the resignation of the mayor, and \$30,000 for each of the 4 plaintiffs.

I'll give you a moment to stop laughing and/or clean up that coffee you just sprayed out of your mouth...

Where do we start?

First off, who the hell is the Christian Civil Liberties Union? A [Google search](#) doesn't reveal much. The only relevant hit is a random [business directory listing](#) for a similarly named org based in Kansas. It is impressive that they've been able to expand to establish a "Milwaukee branch" without any Web presence whatsoever.

Now, who are the plaintiffs? Robert C. Braun of West Allis, Joseph Kogelmann of Milwaukee, Robert Brough of West Bend and the Rev. Cleveland Eden of Milwaukee. Hmm....only one of them lives in the city of West Bend. The rest are all in Milwaukee County. Not sure what kind of standing they have to file such a claim, or why they are using the West Bend Library for their young adult reading in the first place, especially when the same book is available in [the young adult collection of numerous branches of the Milwaukee Public Library](#). *Wait a minute*, didn't the article say each of the plaintiffs are "elderly". [Yep](#). Huh, wonder why they're reading young adult fiction in the first place?

I mean, I'm *sure* they actually drove to West Bend and read it. Good Christians wouldn't be deceitful and just file a lawsuit claiming "their mental and emotional well-being were damaged by the book at the Library" if that weren't the case. *Surely*....

But what of the accusations against the book itself? Generally, they seem to be concerned about books that are "obscene or racial in content and promote violence." Hmm.... In particular to *Baby Be-Bop*, they describe the book as being "explicitly vulgar, racial (sic) and anti-Christian." They continue to claim that "specific words used in the book are derogatory and slanderous to all males, and dangerously offensive and disrespectful to all people" and that the "words can permeate violence, and puts one's life in possible jeopardy, adults and children alike."

Words...damn WORDS! They always take the fun out of life. If we could only black out those "specific words" that are "slanderous to all males" (whatever the f**k that means), we could get on with our good Christian lives.

So, what remedies to these good Christians seek? An community reading group to try to gain a better understanding the book? An invitation to have the author come and discuss it? Convene a panel of young adult readers to tell us what they think about the book?

Nah. Says the plaintiffs: "we want it out or destroyed". With any luck, we'll be able to witness its burning in a pyre suitable for St. Joan of Arc.

And more than just destroying the offending words, they want the mayor to resign (because, as we all know, it is the mayor who decides what books are in the library). They also want a grand jury convened to investigate whether the book should be declared obscene (an excellent use of taxpayers money; glad 3 non-residents suggested it).

And to top it all off, about \$30,000 per plaintiff will make all the "mental and emotional well-being [that] were damaged by the book" all better. I'm sure the good folks in West Bend will be happy to provide \$120K to put their minds at ease.

This really is hilarious.

And, this really is frightening, as it shows how quickly we can [tumble down the slippery slope](#) of threats to intellectual freedom.