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Where is David? Book banning is alive and well in homophobic America

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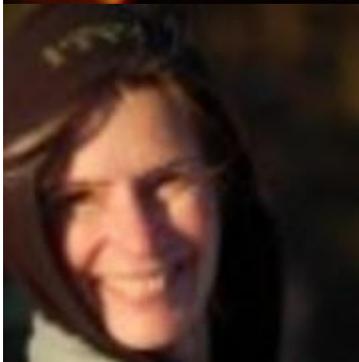
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September 3, 2009

[David Shirley](#) biked across the heart of America today, [cycling against negligence](#). In Milwaukee, he also cycled up a little dust for banned books.

Evidently [West Bend, Wisconsin](#) is recovering from the threat of book terrorists. One [questionable young adult book](#) in particular was targeted in the offensive: [Francesca Lia Block's Baby Be-Bop](#). Evidently it has homosexual tendencies.

A West Bend parent, Maria Hanrahan, disabled this terrorist plot by forming an opposition group she named [West Bend Parents for Free Speech](#), concerned with protecting the local library collection from *attempts at censorship*.

"We believe that the public library should serve all of its library patrons and not make moral judgments. We believe the only valid form of censorship concerning library materials is parents' and library patrons' right not to read (or allow their children to read) anything they don't approve of," Hanrahan stated.

West Bend could become poster child for an annual campaign sponsored by The American Library Association. The [2009 Banned Book Week](#) begins September 26 and runs through October 3.

The [ALA](#) has posted a fascinating interactive map of the United States, dotted with blue tabs defining [which books have been banned where in the U.S](#) during the period 2007-2009. The map is smothered in blue tabs, though as the site reports, "The ALA recorded 513 challenges in 2008 but estimates that this reflects only 20-25% of actual incidents, as most challenges are never reported."

Sadly, one blue tab represents Castle Rock, Colorado: "[Sarah Brannen's Uncle Bobby's Wedding](#) was challenged at the [Douglas County Library](#), citing that because the book features two gay guinea pigs, it contained material inappropriate for young children." Which proves censorship can happen in any neck of the wood.



Hating [homosexuality](#) did not begin or end with [Matthew Shepard in Wyoming](#). The Wisconsin controversy surrounded books dealing with homosexuality, as [CNN.com](#) reported:

Ginny Maziarka, 49, said the books in the section of the library aimed at children aged 12 to 18 included homosexual and heterosexual content she thought was inappropriate for youths.

She and her husband also asked the library to obtain books about homosexuality that affirmed heterosexuality, such as titles written by "ex-gays," Maziarka said.

"All the books in the young-adult zone that deal with homosexuality are gay-affirming. That's not balance," she said.

Seems there is a great deal of [fear surrounding homosexuality](#). Fear that these tendencies can be caught or taught. Truth is, [homosexuals exist](#) outside of Boston/Cambridge, Seattle, Oakland/Berkeley, Washington D.C., Chicago/Evanston, Manhattan and San Francisco.

Two young adult authors who write stories with lesbian and gay protagonists are Maureen Johnson and David Levithan. Blogger [Justine Larbalestier](#) reports, "I've seen some of the letters [Maureen](#) and [David](#) get from [teen](#) readers of their books. Readers thanking them for showing them that they're not alone, giving them the courage to come out, for making their lives more tolerable."

Small comfort that [J. R. R. Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings](#) was burned in Alamogordo, New Mexico in 2001 outside Christ Community Church because it, along with other Tolkien novels, was considered satanic. Brings back claims of Kennedy, Reagan and Clinton as the [Anti-Christ](#).

"Remember what Bilbo used to say: It's a dangerous business, Frodo, going out your door. You step onto the road, and if you don't keep your feet, there's no knowing where you might be swept off to."