

8-14-2009

JSOnline Column: Read not, sin not? I think not

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Recommended Citation

Concerned West Bend Citizen, "JSOnline Column: Read not, sin not? I think not" (2009). *West Bend Community Memorial Library (Wisconsin)*, 2009. Paper 376.

http://dc.uwm.edu/west_bend_library_challenge/376

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Friday, August 14, 2009

[JOnline Column: Read not, sin not? I think not](#)

The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel has published an [op/ed column](#) by Joe Simon on the West Bend Library fiasco, dripping in sarcasm and sage advice. Some excerpts:

Finally, someone is doing something to save and protect our wayward youth. For too long, we have pretended that it was drugs, peer pressure and involvement in petty crimes and gangs that corrupted our young people. We mistakenly have condemned mindless television, violent video games and nihilistic music when, in fact, the real enemy has been right there under our reading glasses.

Yes, I am talking about books. It is now clear that they are responsible for everything wrong with today's society.

For too long, we have assumed that encouraging reading would make our children better people, more understanding of diversity, more aware of cultural and ethnic differences and more intellectually enlightened. But no longer.

I congratulate Jim and Ginny Maziarka, the vigilant parents in West Bend who have waged war to cleanse their public library of all that is indecent and immoral. They have selflessly spent hours upon hours searching out the filthiest phrases in young people's literature so the phrases can be taken out of context. After all, if you cannot read about something, then it is easier to pretend it does not exist. Like homosexuality or science.

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Unfortunately, even though the Maziarkas have come up with 82 questionable books that need to be censored, I think they must have missed quite a few. Indeed, almost any book can seem dirty if you have a dirty enough mind. And apparently, people in West Bend do. Therefore, it would be better to ban all books. By doing this, we can assure that our children will stay as ignorant as guppies and just as docile (although, we hope, not as promiscuous).

Still, it must be confusing for the children in West Bend to watch adults fight over the content of a bunch of silly books. Up until now, libraries were the last place most kids wanted to be seen entering. Now, with their curiosity up, they actually might be tempted to start reading. Soon, they may even develop their own points of view. Or, God forbid, empathy and tolerance for others.