

NAACP Bucks County Branch

July 26, 2022

NAACP Bucks County CBSD Community Against Book Bans Press Conference Speech on Policy 109.2

Good evening. I am Karen Downer, Branch President of the NAACP of Bucks County.

I want to begin by reading you a quote from Carmen Maria Machado, the author of “In The Dream House”:

“Preventing children from reading my book, or any book, won’t protect them. On the contrary, it may rob them of ways to understand the world they’ll encounter, or even the lives they’re already living. You can’t recognize what you’ve never been taught to see. You can’t put language to something for which you’ve been given no language. Why do we not see these acts of censorship for what they are: shortsighted, violent, and unforgivable”.

Central Bucks School District is joining the escalating force of book banning in response to a small group of extremely vocal parents who are far from representing the majority and truly do not speak for Black and Brown parents whose voices must be included in the conversation.

I read the school district’s explanation or clarification of the updated Library Materials Policy 109.2. A couple of comments drew my attention.

The school district stated, and I quote: “Our students also deserve access to the great diversity of ideas that are part of the human *experience*. *That is a tremendous responsibility – one that we deeply embrace and share with the parents of the district, and one that extends to our school libraries.*”

As I read this statement, I wonder why many parents have complained that the school libraries currently provide limited exposure to diversity of ideas or human experiences. These parents

P.O. Box 224. Bensalem. PA 19020

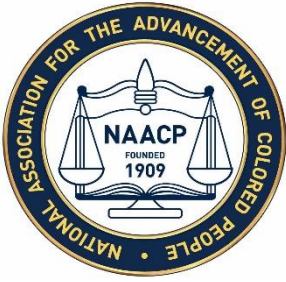
Ph# 215-364-1057

Email: BucksNAACP@BucksNAACP2253.org

Website: www.NAACP Bucks.org

Facebook: [@NAACPBucks](https://www.facebook.com/NAACPBucks)

Twitter & Instagram: [@BucksNAACP](https://www.instagram.com/BucksNAACP)



NAACP Bucks County Branch

want their children to be able to see themselves reflected in pictures and stories. They want their children to not feel “othered” in their looks and thoughts and ideas and religion. So, are we to believe that this updated policy is suddenly going to address this concern?

The school district also says, and I quote *“There are books, though, that contain salacious, gratuitous, graphic, explicit sexual content with no literary or educational applications; those do not belong in school libraries”*.

Now this statement completely surprised me. I am sure that parents have always taken it for granted that such books were never available in schools. But that statement is often applied to certain types of subject matter like race and racism, sexual orientation, and gender identity. Books that are most frequently challenged by that small group of vocal parents and citizens and tend to include certain themes:

- Books that have to do with race and racism, or that center on protagonists which are people of color
- Books that have to do with history, specifically that of Black people
- Books that have to do with LGBTQ topics or characters
- Books that have to do with sex, abortion, teen pregnancy, or puberty
- Books written by minority authors or that have diverse content

Parents can control what their own children read but they do not have the right to restrict what is available to other people. They can have their child opt out of an assignment but cannot be permitted to infringe on the rights of others.

Book censorship is harmful to our children. It threatens our children’s first amendment rights. It limits students’ exposure to great literature. Books have the capability of changing the world. Books are some of our best teachers. Many banned books become celebrated classics. Books can give our children a sense of belonging and can legitimize who they are. Books that talk about challenging subjects can be a mirror to reflect

P.O. Box 224. Bensalem. PA 19020

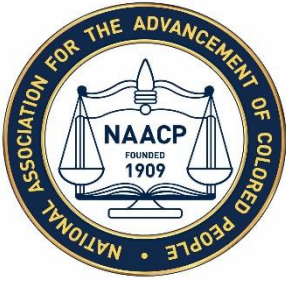
Ph# 215-364-1057

Email: BucksNAACP@BucksNAACP2253.org

Website: www.NAACP Bucks.org

Facebook: [@NAACPBucks](https://www.facebook.com/NAACPBucks)

Twitter & Instagram: [@BucksNAACP](https://www.instagram.com/BucksNAACP)



NAACP Bucks County Branch

yourself. Books can also be a window that opens us to better see, understand and empathize with others.

The NAACP Bucks County demands that the CBSD accept the Library Policy proposed by the Central Bucks Library Department which follows the National Standards and Practices that will ensure that every child can freely read and consider information and ideas regardless of the content or the viewpoint of the author.

Finally, I want to close with a quote from Toni Morrison, Nobel Prize laureate, on book banning:

"I come from a race of people for whom at one time in this country it was illegal to be taught to read...white people who taught Black people how to read were taking the risk of being punished...I think the same sensibilities that informed those people to make it a criminal act for Black people to read are the ancestors of the same people who are making it a criminal act for their own children to read and I don't see a great deal of difference between the two. There is some hysteria associated with the idea of reading that is all out of proportion to what...in fact happens when one reads."

Karen Downer
President
NAACP Bucks County Branch

P.O. Box 224. Bensalem. PA 19020

Ph# 215-364-1057

Email: BucksNAACP@BucksNAACP2253.org

Website: www.NAACP Bucks.org

Facebook: [@NAACPBucks](https://www.facebook.com/NAACPBucks)

Twitter & Instagram: [@BucksNAACP](https://www.instagram.com/BucksNAACP)