



SO, YOUR BOOK HAS BEEN CHALLENGED

A Tip Sheet for Authors

Campaigns to remove books from public schools and libraries are spreading quickly across the United States—particularly books that deal with race, gender, and sexuality. Those who stand up for diverse literature and honest history are confronting misinformation, if not overt hostility and intimidation. With so many calling for censorship, how can authors mobilize and respond? And how can authors assert their right to free expression and personal safety in the face of these aggressive campaigns? Here are a few suggestions.

1. BRUSH UP ON THE BASICS: WHAT IS A BOOK BAN?

- Book bans can mean permanently removing a book from the classroom or library shelf, but they aren't always that straightforward. Rarely do people say they're seeking to ban a book; rather, they identify lists of books or authors and subject them to endless review processes that "suspend" them from classrooms and libraries. Just because it's temporary doesn't make it any less of a ban.

2. SPEAK OUT. RAISE PUBLIC AWARENESS.

- While you shouldn't feel that it's your responsibility to respond to calls to ban your book, you might find a sense of empowerment in addressing those who are skeptical of your book's right to be on the shelf. Raising public awareness can help students, teachers, parents and communities on the front line of these challenges, too. Consider these op-eds by [Maia Kobabe](#), [George M. Johnson](#), [Carmen Maria Machado](#), and [Julia Scheeres](#), or PEN America's [PEN Pals series](#).



TIP SHEET

3. REPORT BOOK CHALLENGES.

- You can report book challenges to organizations like the [National Coalition Against Censorship](#) and the [American Library Association](#). Reporting a book's removal or ban means that you won't be alone in fighting the challenge. These organizations also use this information to publish annual reports on the state of censorship, and this data will help advocacy organizations like ours fight book bans in the future. These summaries help supporters of literature understand what kind of content is threatened and which authors and readers are most harmed by book removals.

4. BE A RESOURCE FOR OTHERS.

- Help authors, students, and communities understand their rights to write and read diverse literature. Support other authors when their books are challenged.

5. FIND SUPPORT AND PROTECT YOURSELF AGAINST ONLINE HARASSMENT.

- Women, people of color, and members of the LGBTQ+ community are disproportionately targeted by online abuse—and students have been targeted for fighting against censorship.
- If you are subjected to online hate and harassment, remember that abuse is not your fault and you are not alone.
- Be sure to take a look at [PEN America's Online Harassment Field Manual](#), which outlines abusive tactics and offers guidance on how to prepare (including against hacking and doxing), respond (including assessing threats, documentation, blocking and muting, and practicing counter-speech), take care of yourself, and find support.