

# COMICS, SOCIAL JUSTICE & YOU

by Moni Barrette



# INTRO



Moni Barrette is Director of Collection Development & Publisher Relations for LibraryPass, President for American Library Association's Graphic Novel and Comics Round Table, co-founder of Creators Assemble and a lecturer at SDSU. She is a former public library manager and frequent panelist at San Diego and New York Comic Con, San Diego Comic Fest and Wonder-Con, hosting industry networking events and providing instruction to educators and librarians. She is currently serving as judge for the 2023 Will Eisner Awards.

[www.CreatorsAssemble.org](http://www.CreatorsAssemble.org)

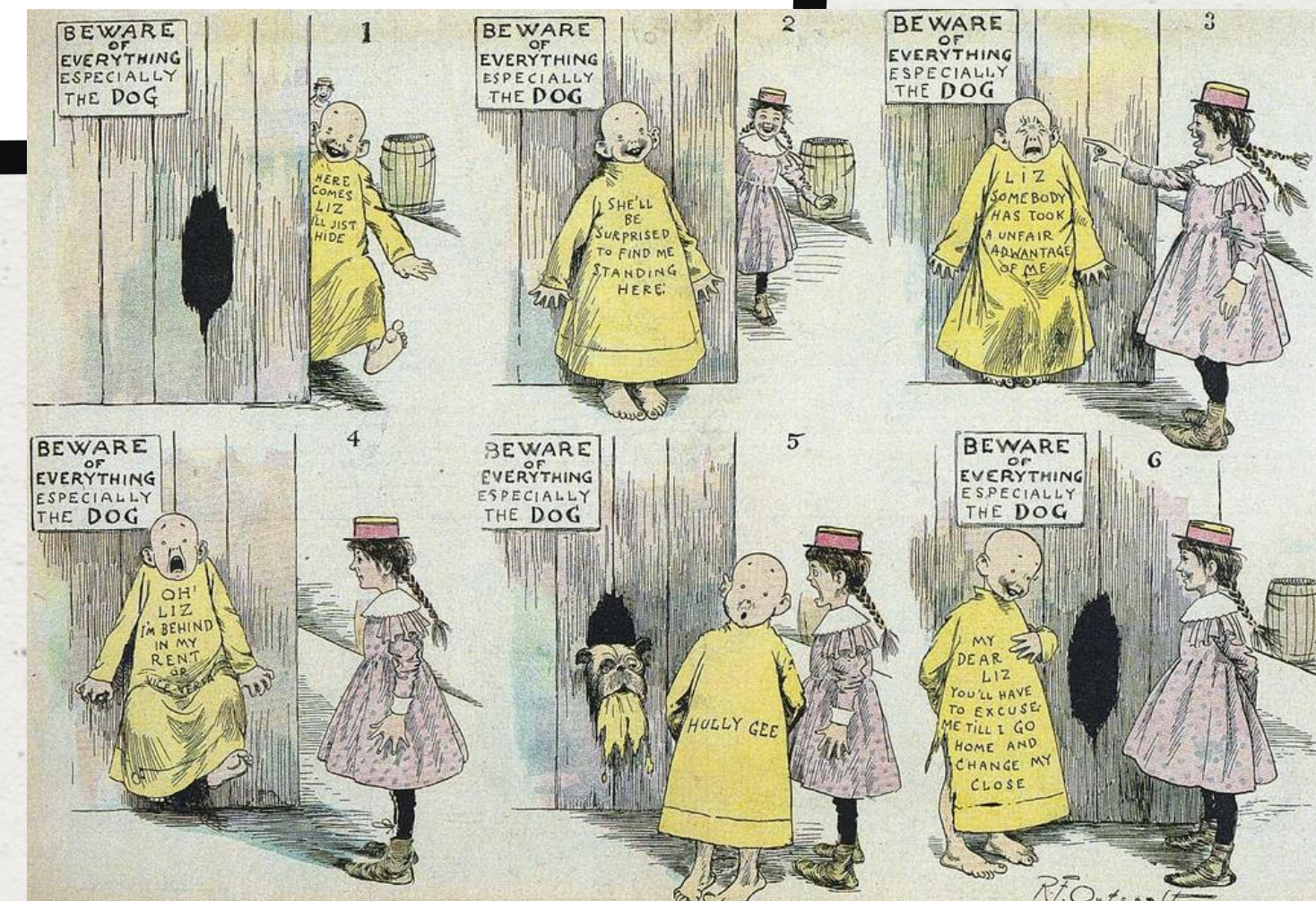


# ***AGENDA & OUTCOMES***

- Define "comics" & understand their value and community uses
- Learn the history of comics industry activism and censorship
- Understand why comics are frequently banned
- Examine patterns and case studies of challenged topics
- Learn actionable ways you can help!
- Leave inspired and armed with new resources

# WHAT ARE "COMICS?"

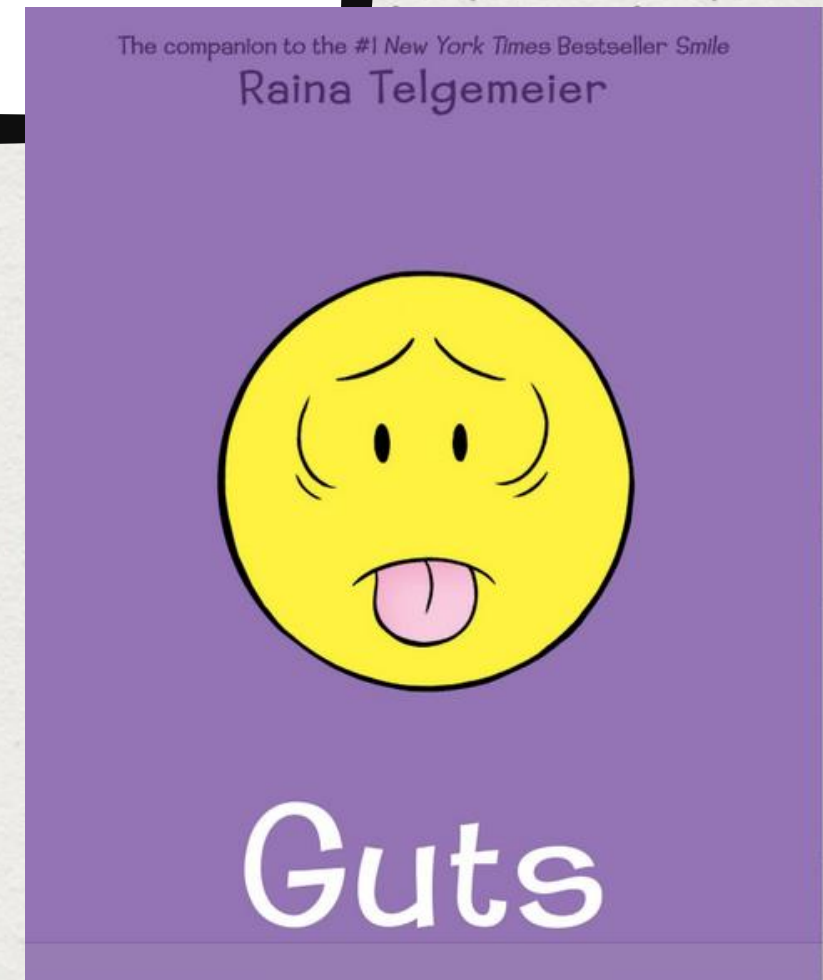
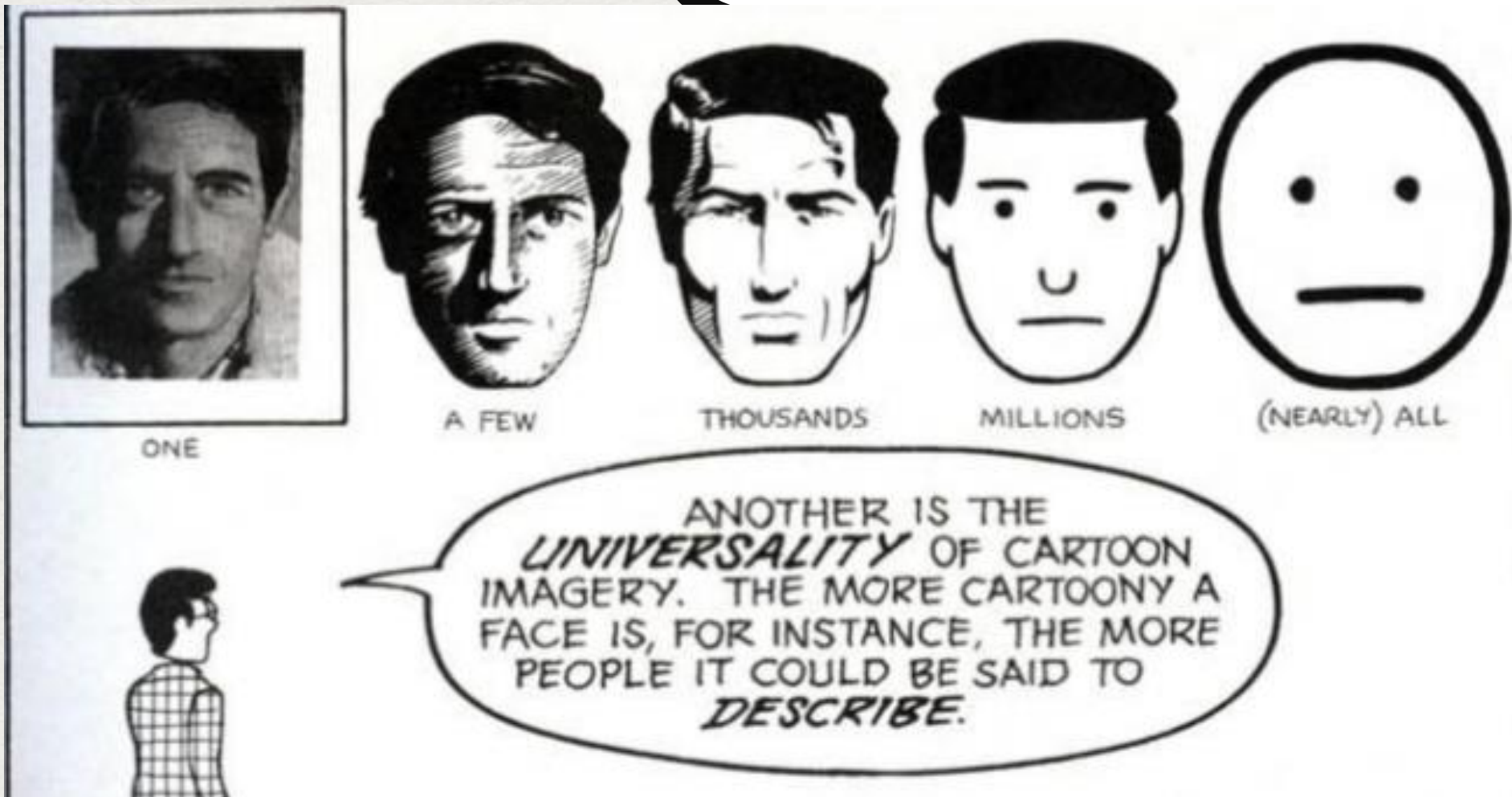
- "A form of visual, sequential art consisting of images which are commonly combined with text, often in the form of speech balloons or image captions"
- Not "graphic" novels
- Hieroglyphics and ancient tapestries are also sequential art!



THE YELLOW KID LOSES SOME OF HIS YELLOW.

# WHY ARE COMICS IMPORTANT?

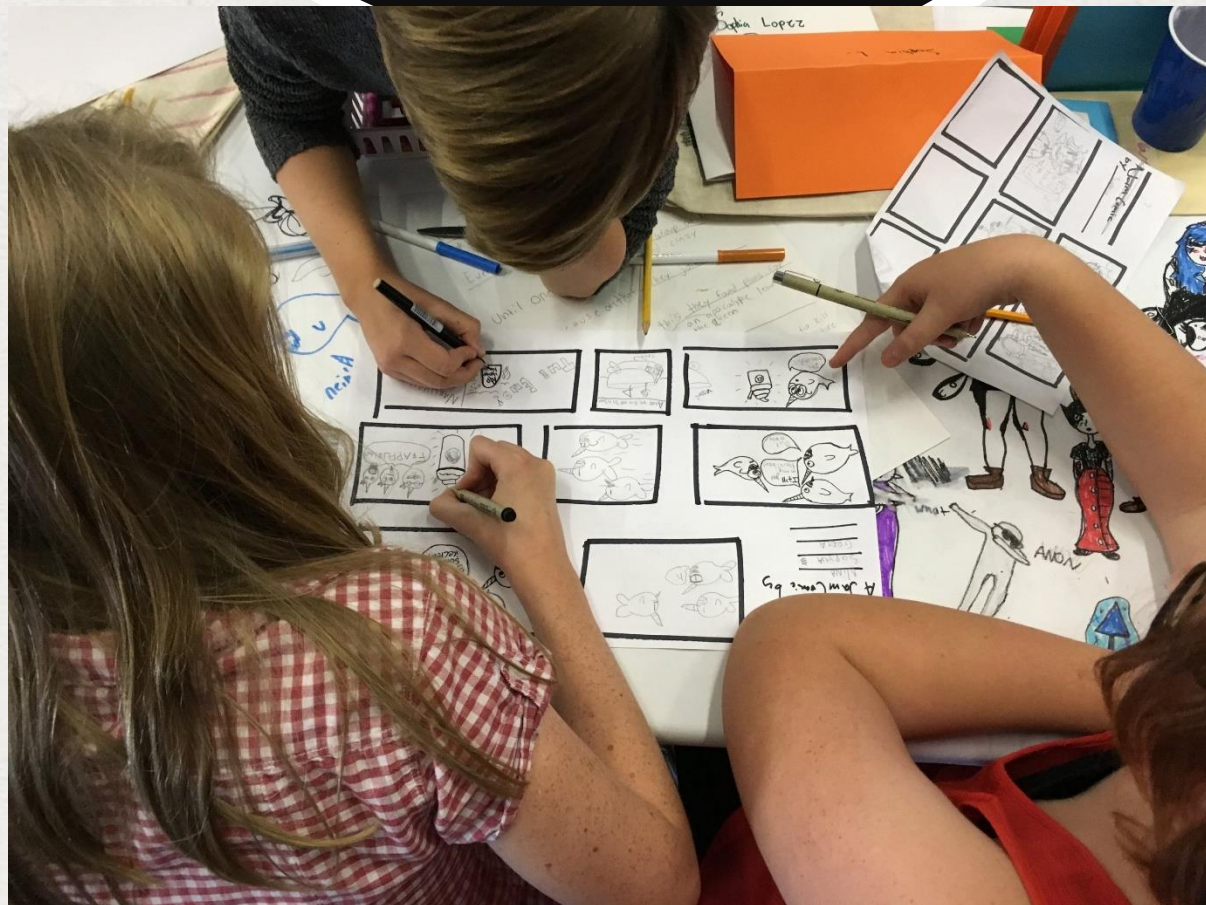
- Illustrations are universal language
- Supports multiple literacies
- There's a comic for everyone
- Comics are powerful tool in social justice and political awareness
- They're ideal for use in education



## Schools

# COMICS IN CURRICULUM

- Exploration of academic and social emotional themes
- Creative writing and drawing exercises
- Supplements or alternatives to traditional textbooks
- Encourage reluctant & ESL readers
- Present and deepen understanding of difficult topics
- ...and so much more!




## Libraries & Shops

- Free Comic Book Day
- Comic Book Clubs
- Conventions
- Makerspace Activities
- Interviews & Panels
- Community-Wide Reads



# COMICS IN COMMUNITIES

Members Only!  
Next original SDCC Adult  
Graphic Novel meeting:  
Monday, May 20th  
6:30 - 8:00 PM  
Pioneer Room  
SAN DIEGO  
**COMIC CON**  
INTERNATIONAL



**Adult Graphic Novel Book Club**

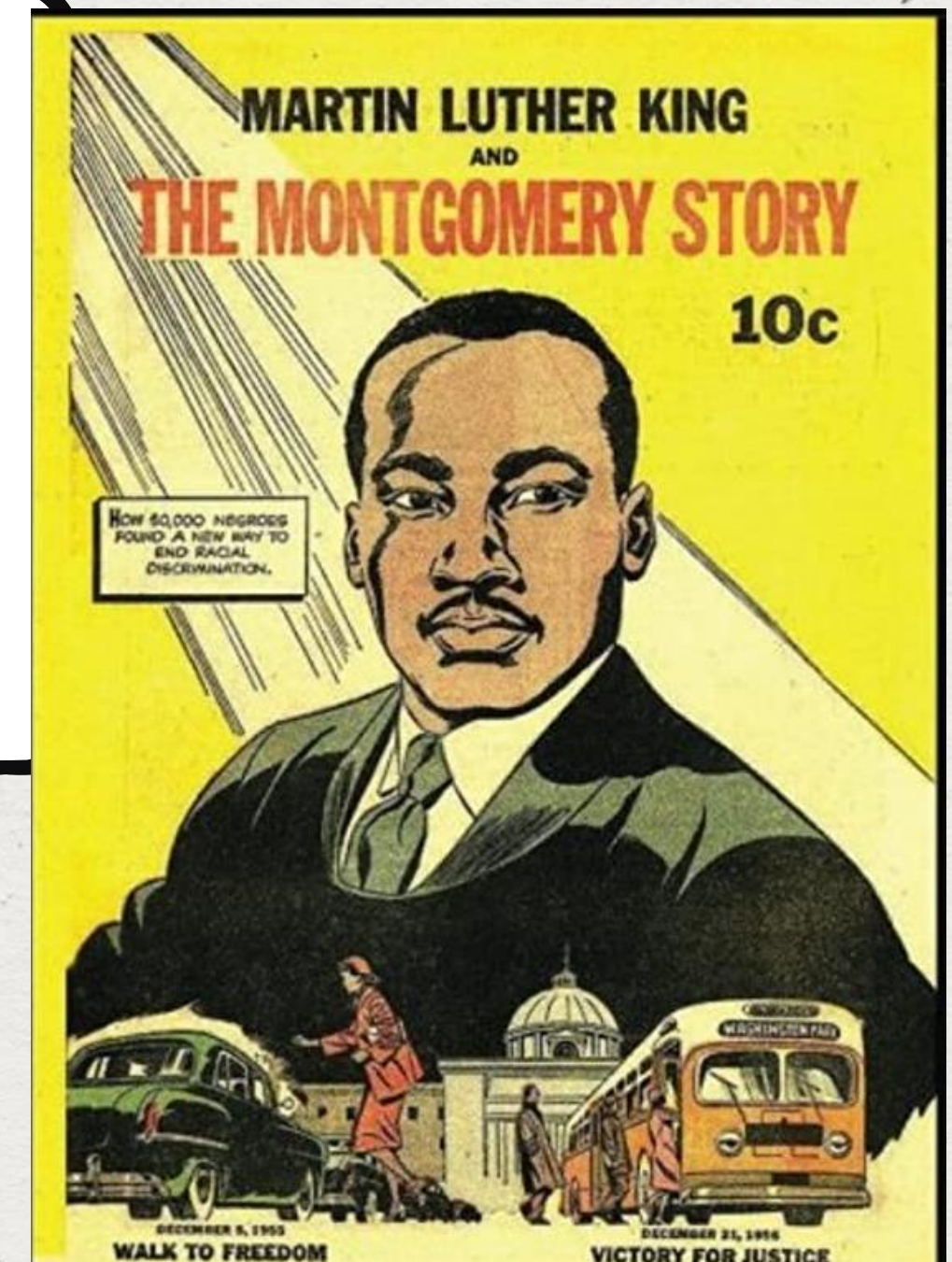
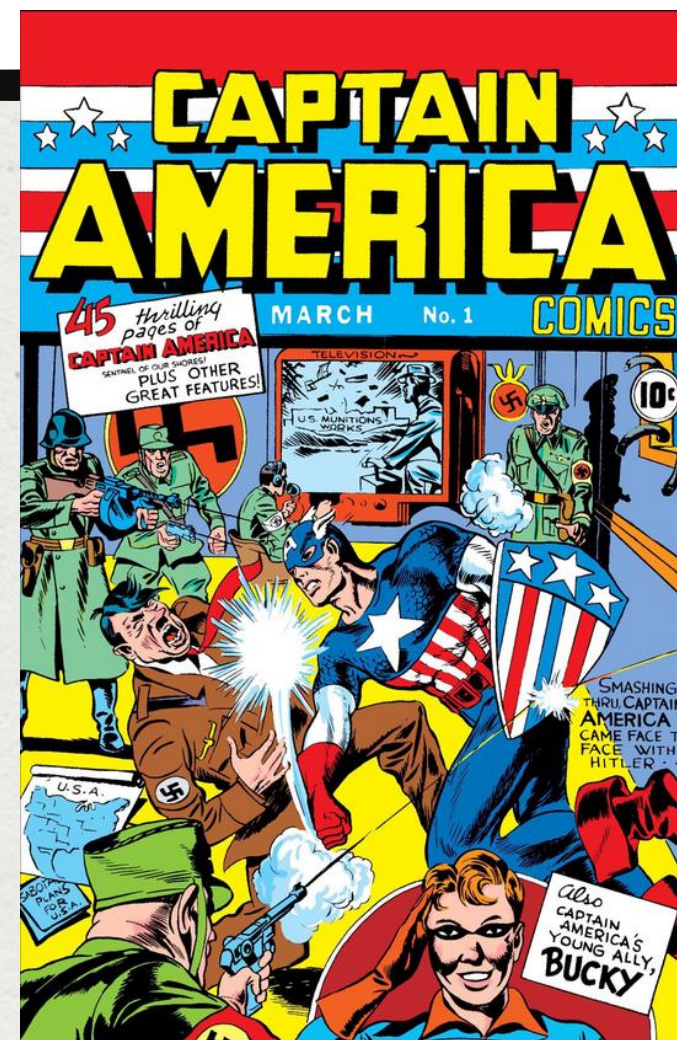
# WHY ARE COMICS FREQUENTLY CHALLENGED?

- Misrepresentation of "graphic"
- "Only for kids:" Lack of understanding of age appropriateness
- Universal nature of imagery plus ease of taking images out of context
- Profanity/offensive language
- Sex or nudity
- Violence and horror
- Drugs and alcohol
- Politically/socially/racially offensive
- Offensive to religious beliefs
- "Low value" format
- Comics historically used to raise awareness and call out injustice
- Comics industry history of self censorship



# SOCIAL JUSTICE IN COMICS: A BRIEF HISTORY

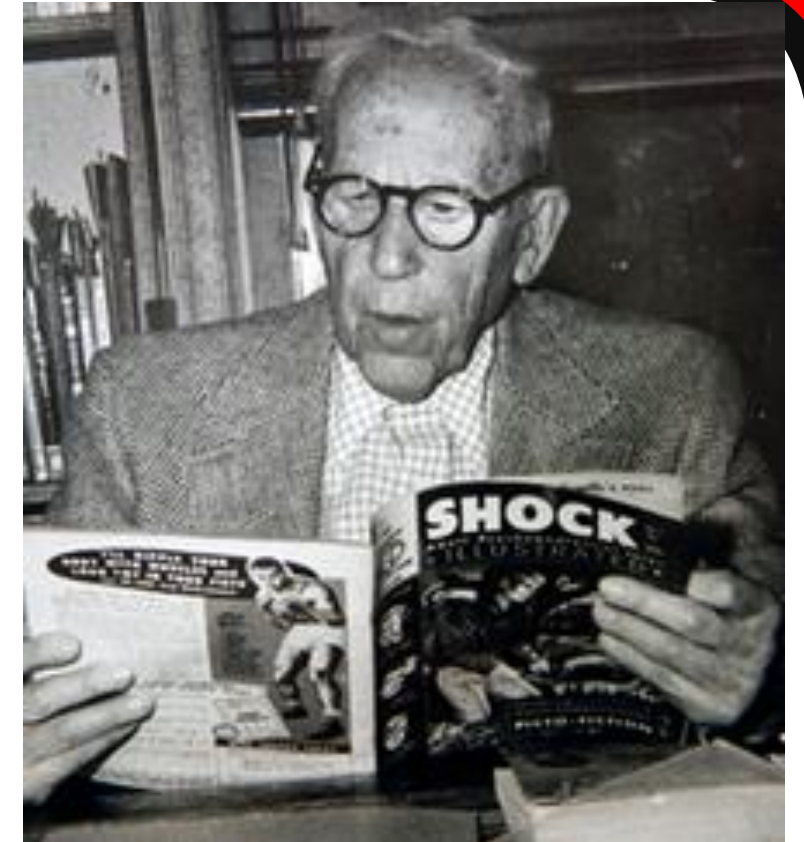
- American's earliest political cartoon helped incite the revolution
- Superheroes portray social values
- MLK and the Montgomery Story inspired peaceful protest



# COMICS INDUSTRY SELF-CENSORSHIP



- 1940s–1950s: Comic Book Hysteria
- 1954: Senate Hearings & formation of The Comics Magazine Association of America
- Early 2000s: Publishers bypassing CCA
- 2001: Marvel stops complying
- 2010: Last 3 comics publishers (DC, Archie & Bongo) drop off
- 2011 CCA is obsolete



"I think Hitler was a beginner compared to the comic book industry. They get the children much younger."  
Dr. Frederic Wertham

# **COMICS CENSORSHIP TODAY**

The American Library Association's Office for Intellectual Freedom documented 1,269 demands to censor library resources in 2022, the highest number of attempted book bans since ALA began compiling this data over 20 years ago.

The number of reported challenges in 2022 nearly doubled the 729 book challenges reported in 2021.



# TDP 13

## MOST CHALLENGED BOOKS OF 2022

The American Library Association tracked **1,269 challenges** to library, school, and university materials and services in 2022. Of the **2,571 unique titles** that were challenged or banned in 2022, here are the top 13 most challenged.



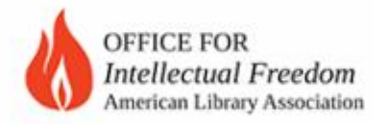
Most common reasons for reported challenges:

- "LGBTQIA+ content, claimed to be sexually explicit"
- Race
- History
- Reproductive health



<b>1</b>  <b>GENDER QUEER</b> by Maia Kobabe <b>REASONS:</b> LGBTQIA+ content, claimed to be sexually explicit	<b>2</b>  <b>ALL BOYS AREN'T BLUE</b> by George M. Johnson <b>REASONS:</b> LGBTQIA+ content, claimed to be sexually explicit	<b>3</b>  <b>The Bluest Eye</b> by Toni Morrison <b>REASONS:</b> rape, incest, claimed to be sexually explicit, EDI content	<b>4</b>  <b>FLAMER</b> by Mike Curato <b>REASONS:</b> LGBTQIA+ content, claimed to be sexually explicit	<b>5</b>  <b>LOOKING FOR ALASKA</b> by John Green <b>REASONS:</b> claimed to be sexually explicit, LGBTQIA+ content	<b>6</b>  <b>THE PERKS OF BEING A WALLFLOWER</b> by Stephen Chbosky <b>REASONS:</b> claimed to be sexually explicit, LGBTQIA+ content, rape, drugs, profanity
--	--	---	--	---	---

<b>7</b>  <b>LAWN BOY</b> by Jonathan Evison <b>REASONS:</b> LGBTQIA+ content, claimed to be sexually explicit	<b>8</b>  <b>THE ABSOLUTELY TRUE DIARY OF A PART-TIME INDIAN</b> by Sherman Alexie <b>REASONS:</b> claimed to be sexually explicit, profanity	<b>9</b>  <b>OUT OF DARKNESS</b> by Ashley Hope Perez <b>REASON:</b> claimed to be sexually explicit	<b>10</b>  <b>A COURT OF MIST AND FURY</b> by Sarah J. Maas <b>REASON:</b> claimed to be sexually explicit	<b>10</b>  <b>CRANK</b> by Ellen Hopkins <b>REASONS:</b> claimed to be sexually explicit, drugs	<b>10</b>  <b>ME AND EARL AND THE DYING GIRL</b> by Jesse Andrews <b>REASONS:</b> claimed to be sexually explicit, profanity	<b>10</b>  <b>THIS BOOK IS GAY</b> by Juno Dawson <b>REASONS:</b> LGBTQIA+ content, sex education, claimed to be sexually explicit
--	---	--	--	---	--	--

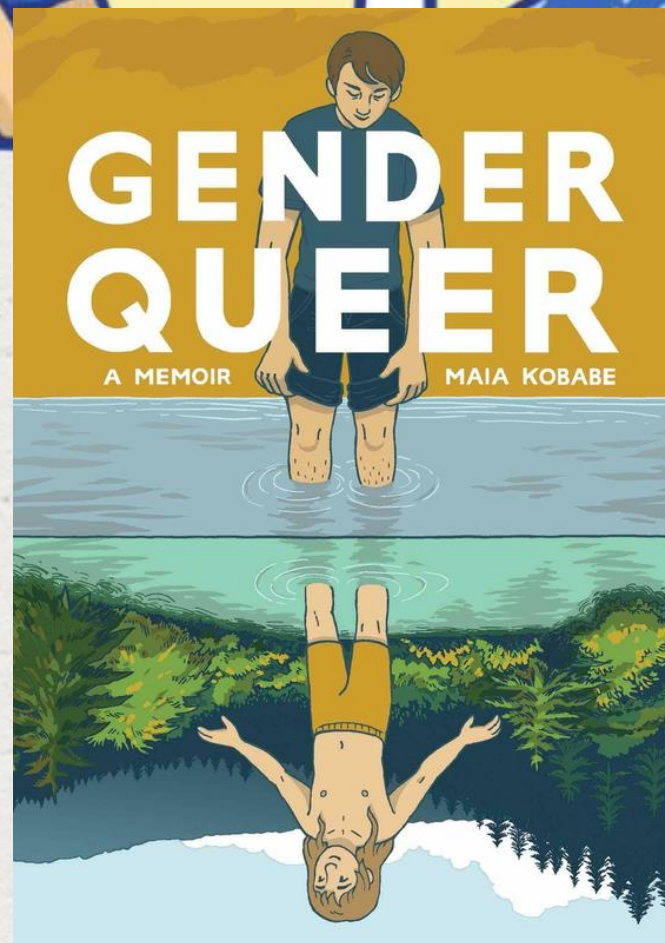


#1 (3rd year in a row) & #4 are comics

In 2022, there were 261 reported comics-specific challenges.



**CENSORED**



**CENSORED**

A TENNESSEE SCHOOL BOARD HAS BANNED MAUS OVER EIGHT SWEAR WORDS AND A NAKED MOUSE.

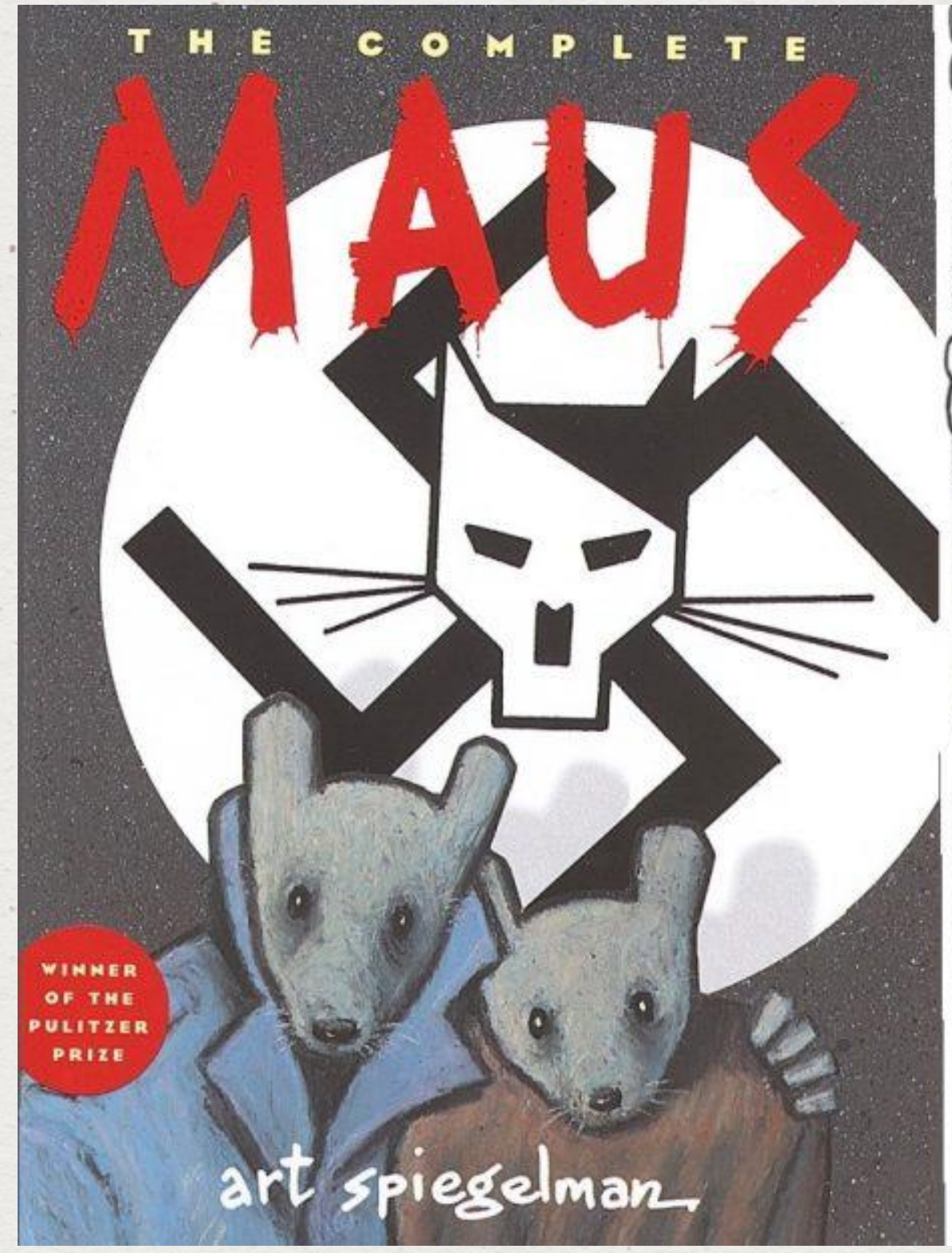


IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH.

BROOKER



"There's only one kind of people who would vote to ban MAUS."  
- NEIL GAIMAN




**CENSORED**

# Texas school district pulls books by acclaimed Black author amid critical race theory claims

Author Jerry Craft said he remains committed to "helping kids become the kind of readers that I never was, letting kids see themselves on my pages."

Parents in Katy ISD may elect to opt out their child(ren) from a guest speaker by completing this form

<https://forms.office.com/r/Fgg0MHaupi>



**AUTHOR VISIT WITH JERRY CRAFT**



Award-winning author Jerry Craft is joining us on Zoom on October 4, 2021. He will discuss his journey from a reluctant reader to published author and illustrator. Jerry Craft is the author of the 2021 Texas Bluebonnet Award nominee "New Kid" and the sequel "Class Act". "New Kid" is the first graphic novel to win the Newbery Award. A graphic novel tells a complete story through illustrations.

Students will be able to submit questions prior to the visit for Mr. Craft to answer.



Parents in Katy ISD may elect to opt out their child(ren) from a guest speaker by completing this form: <https://forms.office.com/r/Fgg0MHaupi>

Jerry Craft's books are published by HarperCollins and are available at your favorite bookstore.

**SYAN RHODES**  
KPRC



Learn more:  
[cbl.df.org/banned-challenged-comics/](http://cbl.df.org/banned-challenged-comics/)

# IMPACT

- Library defunding
- College curriculums
- Staff burnout & shortages
- Litigation & legal ramifications
- Fear mongering & divisiveness
- Snowball effect
- YOUR RIGHTS!

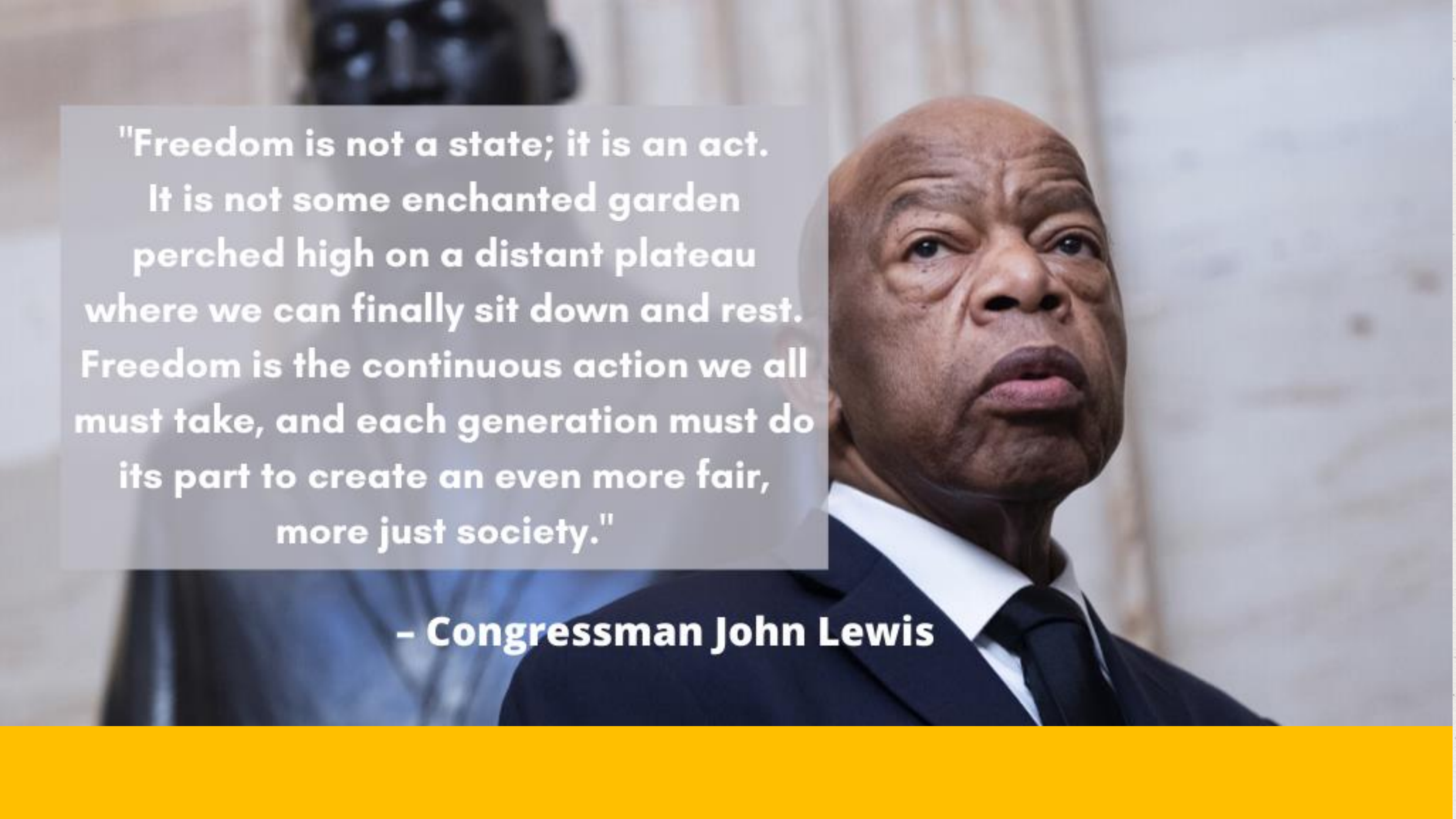




# SUPPORT FOR BOOK BANS?

A nonpartisan poll from September 2022 found that the majority of voters strongly oppose book banning:

- 91% of voters agree with the statement "If you don't like a book at a library, don't check it out. Other people shouldn't be able to control what my family can read."
- Half of voters believe there is "absolutely no time when a book should be banned."
- Only 8% of voters think "there are many books that are inappropriate and should be banned."
- Voters have favorable feelings about libraries (69%), librarians (66%), schools (53%), and school librarians (62%)

A close-up photograph of Congressman John Lewis, an African American man with a balding head, wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and dark tie. He is looking upwards and to the right with a thoughtful expression. The background is a blurred, light-colored wall.

**"Freedom is not a state; it is an act.  
It is not some enchanted garden  
perched high on a distant plateau  
where we can finally sit down and rest.  
Freedom is the continuous action we all  
must take, and each generation must do  
its part to create an even more fair,  
more just society."**

**- Congressman John Lewis**



# TAKING ACTION

Things you can do NOW:

- Read!
- Make yourself heard
- Donate
- Spread the word
- Combine forces
- Make "good trouble"

- Sign the petition against book bans!  
[action.everylibrary.org/banning](https://action.everylibrary.org/banning)
- Comic book bans and court cases: CBLDF [cbldf.org](https://cbldf.org)
- What librarians are doing: [ala.org/rt/gncrt/tools](https://ala.org/rt/gncrt/tools)
- ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom public awareness (scroll down): [ala.org/aboutala/offices/oif](https://ala.org/aboutala/offices/oif)
- Sign up for the EveryLibrary newsletter: [everylibrary.org](https://everylibrary.org)
- READ: Social justice comics reading lists  
[bookriot.com/social-justice-comics/](https://bookriot.com/social-justice-comics/) &  
[ala.org/rt/gncrt/friday-forum-lists](https://ala.org/rt/gncrt/friday-forum-lists)
- Keep up-to-date with legislation and more with Book Riot Book Censorship News [bookriot.com](https://bookriot.com)
- Find a local anti-censorship group to join:  
[bookriot.com/anti-censorship-groups](https://bookriot.com/anti-censorship-groups)
- Template to write your legislators about book bans:  
[bookriot.com/template-to-write-legislators-about-book-bans/](https://bookriot.com/template-to-write-legislators-about-book-bans/)

Scan for these resources, image credits, & further learning

**TAKE  
ACTION!**





Thank you for your time! [moni@creatorsassemble.org](mailto:moni@creatorsassemble.org)