





# unburnable diversity

# REPRESENTATION

# EMPATHY

widening world view ideas  
change  
individuality social criticism  
new perspectives  
deconstruction  
awareness  
thriving on differences  
identity  
liberation



broadening horizons  
#ownvoices  
normalising  
non-normative relationships  
solidarity  
safe experiences providing language + terms  
self-expression  
social and political differences & relevance

banning  
anti-American  
SATANIC  
predatory  
grooming  
confusing  
blasphemous  
indoctrination  
too graphic  
VIOLENCE  
obscene  
vulgar  
OCCULT  
pornography  
unnatural  
offensive  
indecent  
anti-war  
inappropriate  
propagation of LGBTQ lifestyle  
challenging  
BURNING



## **Burned Edges**

I am a book.

I consist of pages, words, human thoughts, and substance. Children push their noses in between my pages smelling the glue and the paper holding me together. Readers sift through my well-read pages, leaving marks and scuffs.

My spine is broken, why do you want to break me more?

Inside me are just words. Words that make you think, that make you change perspective. True, there are some books that are scary. But am I truly one of them? I don't feel scary.

But it seems that judgment has already been passed.

I feel heat. For the last time, human hands will stroke over my cover.

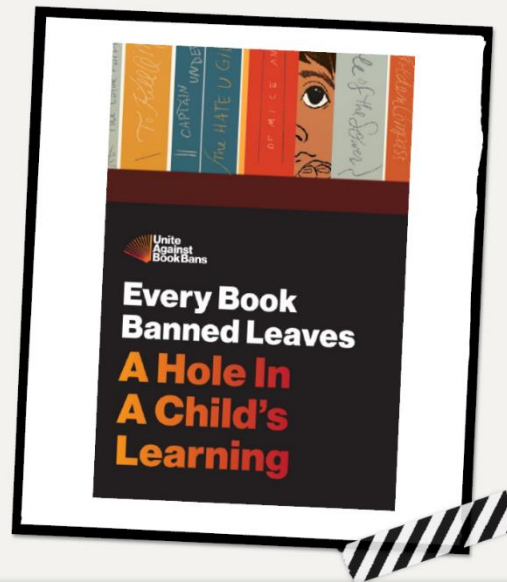
I am a book. With burned edges.



# Challenge the Challengers!

Choose **action toolkits** with these possible steps against book challenging:

1. Discuss and Argue
2. Contact Decision Makers
3. Start or Support a Petition
4. Make it Public
5. Peaceful Protests



Trust individuals to make their own decisions about what to read.

## Use your voice with these arguments:



"Removing and banning books from public libraries is a slippery slope to government censorship and the erosion of our country's commitment to freedom of expression."

"Books are tools for understanding complex issues. Limiting young people's access to books does not protect them from life's complex and challenging issues."

"Young people deserve to see themselves reflected in a library's books."



## Further Steps:

Contact  
Decision  
Makers

- School and library board members are elected to represent the opinion of their local community. Make your opinion heard by them.

Petition

- Create - Circulate - Deliver
- Gather support

Contact  
Media

- Writing the editor, share your progress on the socials
- Report the incident to ALA

Peaceful  
Protests

- Organize a peaceful protest to raise awareness



For further information please look at:  
Unite Against Book Bans. <https://uniteagainstbookbans.org/toolkit/>



# The Unburnable Book - The Handmaid's Tale

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An unburnable copy of Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* was printed in 2022 as a reaction against growing cases of censorship and book bannings. The specially commissioned edition was auctioned for \$130,000 with the proceeds going to an organization advocating free expression. *The Handmaid's Tale* is continuously on lists of banned books ever since its publishing in 1985. With its themes of censorship, religious totalitarianism and femininity, it is a bleak but important read.

In the promotional video for the auction Atwood herself appears like one of the Firemen in *Fahrenheit 451* and tries to destroy her book with a flamethrower. Unsuccessfully. Thus, sending a strong message to people and institutions attacking free speech. Atwood takes a stance against this censorship and references another dystopian novel concerned with the banning of books:

"Let's hope we don't reach the stage of wholesale book burnings, as in *Fahrenheit 451*. But if we do, let's hope some books will prove unburnable".



## AUTHORS AND PUBLIC VOICES ON BOOK BANNING

“Books [...] are seen as dangerous because of the **immense power** they have to **create change through empathy**.”

(Angie Thomas, author of *The Hate U Give*)



## IMPORTANCE OF BOOKS

### Representation of diverse voices

“The only place I had **access to information** and stories about transgender people was in media — mainly, in books.”  
(Kobabe, “Schools”)

“Removing or restricting queer books in libraries and schools is like cutting a lifeline for queer youth, who might not yet even know what **terms** to ask Google to find out more about their own **identities, bodies and health**.” (ibid.)

### Creating room for discussion

“Censorship is an attempt to silence the words of an author, but what really gets silenced is the **chance for authentic and meaningful conversation between adults and children**. Forbidding books that children love and find resonant just adds to their growing list of things that adults don’t understand and that have to be discussed only with other kids.” (Sheffer 2 on L’Engle’s *A Wrinkle in Time*)

### Safe environment for making new experiences

“I think encountering a difficult subject in literature is just about the **safest place** that you can engage with it [...] And it’s of course safer and less immediate than experiencing that first-hand in their own lives.” (Kobabe, qtd. in Kois)





# ARGUMENTS AGAINST BOOK CHALLENGES

“Adults need to take more notice that **kids and young people know a lot more than we give them credit for,**” [Coyl, who is the president of the Freedom to Read Foundation] said.

[And he added:] “When **they see injustice, they speak up against it.** If [a book] speaks to them, they will find it. They also know what they don’t want to read.” (LA Times)

INDIVIDUALS SHOULD BE TRUSTED TO MAKE THEIR OWN  
DECISIONS ABOUT WHAT TO READ.



# REVOLT AGAINST BOOK BANNINGS!



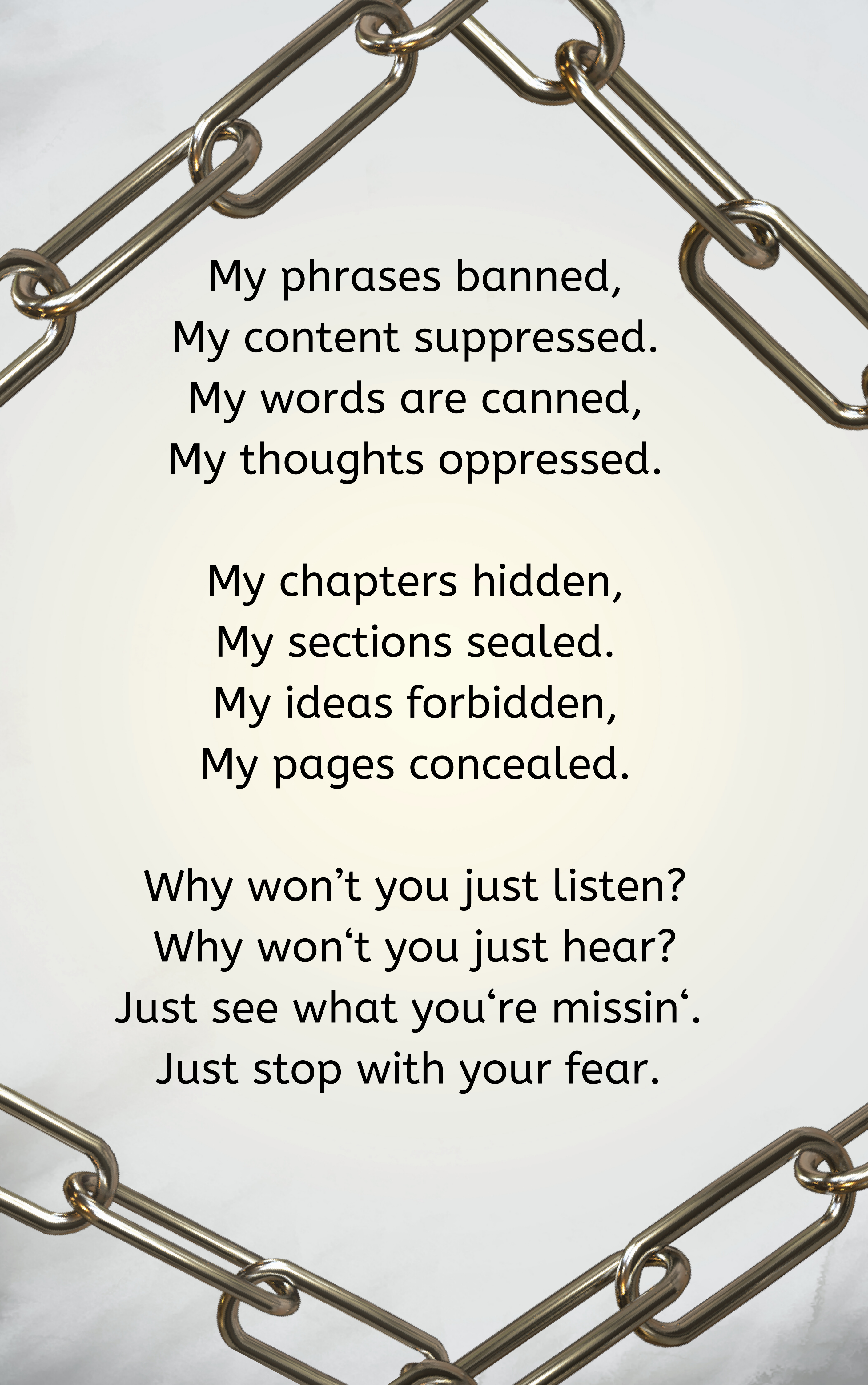
Johnson (author of *Not All Boys are Blue*, 3<sup>rd</sup> most challenged book in 2021) said that “bans have only led him to **redouble his efforts.**” “My philosophy has been, ‘Well they can’t ban all the damn books,’ ” said Johnson. “So I **keep writing.**” (LA Times)

“There are things that are happening right now in your community, in your neighborhood, your school, that you have the **power to change,** and you could do something about them. That’s how you **change the world,**”

Thomas said. “**The power you have is stronger than the hate anybody could give.**” (ibid.)







My phrases banned,  
My content suppressed.  
My words are canned,  
My thoughts oppressed.

My chapters hidden,  
My sections sealed.  
My ideas forbidden,  
My pages concealed.

Why won't you just listen?  
Why won't you just hear?  
Just see what you're missin'.  
Just stop with your fear.



# MOMS AND STUDENTS AGAINST BOOK BANNING IN FLORIDA

“This is the 21st century. We don’t ban books, right? [The outrage about *Gender Queer* at a school board meeting] was even more personal to me because my child, who was 12 at the time, had just come out as non-binary. I gave them ‘Gender Queer’ after that so they could find acceptance and confirmation and know they were not alone.”

*(Jen Cousins, co-founder of the Florida Freedom to Read Project)*

“We chose public schools because of diversity. But diversity is under attack. They’re targeting minority communities whose stories are only just getting out there on the shelves.”

*(Stephana Ferrell, co-founder of the Florida Freedom to Read Project)*

“My biggest concern is that students will not have access to books that represent everyone. We’re going to send these kids out into the world, and they’ll be competing against students in other states that have not banned books. They’re going to sound ignorant.”

*(Sonia Ledger, high school teacher in Orange County, Florida)*

“Book banning is being weaponized to harm LGBTQ+ students and students of color.”

*(Will Larkins, senior at Winter Park High School in Florida)*

“I’m hated for existing.”

*(LGBTQ+ student, living near Pulse, a gay nightclub in Orlando, where a gunman killed 49 people in 2016)*



*Protest during Orange County, Florida School Board Meeting (11 April 2023)*



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