

FIGHTING WORDS



As you celebrate Banned Books Week and the right to read, draw inspiration for the ongoing battle for free expression from some of CBLDF's favorite comics creators!

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Alison Bechdel

On the attempt to ban *Fun Home* from public libraries in Marshall, Missouri: My first reaction is: What a great honor! My second reaction is, it's a very interesting situation, and it's all about the power of images, which I think is something people need to talk about. I can understand why people wouldn't want their children to accidentally think this was a funny comic book and pick it up and see pictures of people having sex. I can understand that. I think banning books is the wrong approach. If you don't want your kids to read it, make sure they don't get a hold of it. But I do understand that concern, because yeah, drawings are very seductive and attention-catching.

(Source: The Comics Journal #282)

On the controversy surrounding the use of *Fun Home* in an elective reading program at the College of Charleston: I'm very grateful to the people who taught my book at the College of Charleston. It was brave of them to do that given the conservative pressures they're apparently under. I made a visit to the school last fall for which they also took some flak, but to their great credit they didn't back down. It's sad and absurd that the College of Charleston is facing a funding cut for teaching my book—a book which is after all about the toll that this sort of small-mindedness takes on people's lives. (Source: Publisher's Weekly)



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NEIL GAIMAN

I wouldn't be who I am without libraries. I was the sort of kid who devoured books, and my happiest times as a boy were when I persuaded my parents to drop me off in the local library on their way to work, and I spent the day there. I discovered that librarians actually want to help you: they taught me about interlibrary loans.

(Source: Neil Gaiman's personal website)

If you accept—and I do—that freedom of speech is important, then you are going to have to defend the indefensible. That means you are going to be defending the right of people to read, or to write, or to say, what you don't say or like or want said...

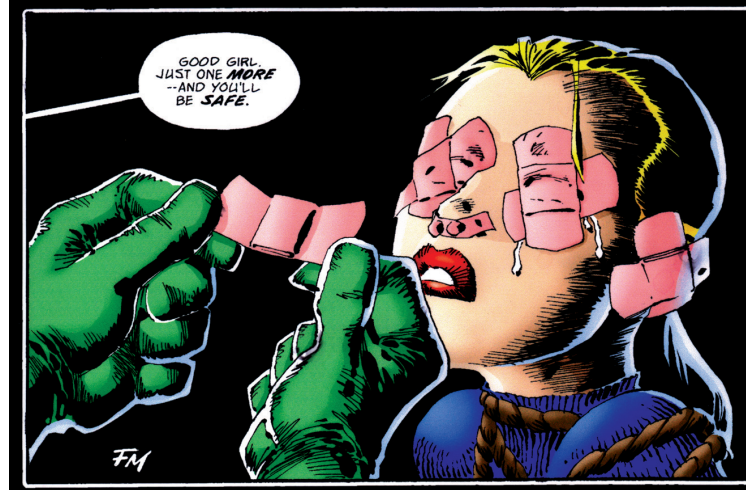
You ask, What makes it worth defending? and the only answer I can give is this: Freedom to write, freedom to read, freedom to own material that you believe is worth defending means you're going to have to stand up for stuff you don't believe is worth defending, even stuff you find actively distasteful, because laws are big blunt instruments that do not differentiate between what you like and what you don't, because prosecutors are humans and bear grudges and fight for re-election, because one person's obscenity is another person's art.

Because if you don't stand up for the stuff you don't like, when they come for the stuff you do like, you've already lost. (Source: "Why Defend Freedom of Icky Speech?", Neil Gaiman's personal website)

On Charlie Hebdo: How important are free speech and satire? Important enough that people will murder others to silence the kind of speech they don't like. It's too easy to think that freedom of speech is an abstract thing. But the freedom to mock, to argue, to disagree, these are important enough that their opponents will do whatever they can to quash them, and that includes murder. (Source: CBLDF)

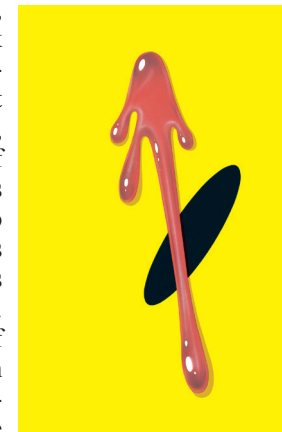
FRANK MILLER

Anything that got between my brush and my drawing board was my enemy. Free speech has a long and honorable history in the United States. This is part of it. But as an artist, I can only say: Get the hell out of my way. (Source: CBLDF)



Alan Moore

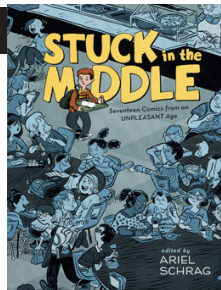
Also, from my own personal point of view, as I said earlier, that I really do not think that we should restrict information to children. And I think that, basically, I know that there are a lot of parents that don't agree, would not agree with me upon that, and of course they have the right, but as long as it's kept upon a parental level, I'm not too worried. If parents are making the decisions that their children can or cannot read this sort of book in the home, that's fair enough. The parents can take the consequences of that. It won't necessarily stop the children reading it, but at least it's a transaction between the child and the parent and it's the parent taking responsibility for their children, which is fair enough. I take a more liberal stance in that I prefer to let my children read anything, but I want to know what they're reading, and if there's anything they come across which might be disturbing, then I'm always on hand to talk about it with them. Which, to me, seems to be the responsible attitude. (Source: The Comics Journal #118)



Watchmen™ and © DC Comics

Ariel Schrag

Kids are going to find the content that they want to find, first of all, and I don't think children should be reading pornography. I wouldn't give it to my children. I don't know. I think it depends on the child, I think it depends on where you think they're at emotionally. I can only really say what I would do with my own child. What age would I give them [my book] *Potential*? I don't know—that would depend on who they were and if I thought they were ready, and if they read it before I thought they were ready, then I would talk to them about it to help them understand it. I think that's all you can really do. Kids are always going to get exposed to things before its ready. I mean, I watched *The Shining* at an eighth grade birthday party and was traumatized for two weeks. But that's expectable that teenagers watch horror movies at birthday parties, that's what they do; for some of the teens, they're fine and some, like me, can't sleep for two weeks. The more important thing is to be a present parent and to be aware of what your child is reading or consuming and be there to talk to them about it if they need to. (Source: Shalom Life)



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Jeff Smith

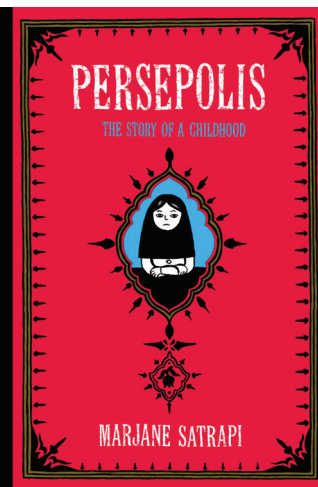
I learned this weekend that *Bone* has been challenged on the basis of "political viewpoint, racism and violence." I have no idea what book these people read. After fielding these and other charges for a while now, I'm starting to think such outrageous accusations (really, racism?) say more about the people who make them than about the books themselves. (Source: CBLDF)

MARJANE SATRAPI

The good thing is that these people who ban things, it's like they are completely unaware of what a human being is. If you want to make adolescents read a book, ban it! And then they all want to read it. Because then they're rebellious. Why not just explain it? It's not like kids are dumb. (Source: American Libraries Magazine)

On the Chicago ban: *It's shameful. I cannot believe something like this can happen in the United States of America... These are not photos of torture. It's a drawing and it's one frame. I don't think American kids of seventh grade have not seen any signs of violence. Seventh graders have brains, and they see all kinds of things on cinema and the Internet. It's a black and white drawing, and I'm not showing something extremely horrible.* (Source: Chicago Tribune)

On Charlie Hebdo: *People have the right to have a different point of view and to provoke. If we allow acts like this to create a climate of fear, we will have lost our freedom.* (Source: New York Times)



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