

# A GREATER FORCE FOR GOOD



COMIC BOOK LEGAL DEFENSE FUND  
ANNUAL REPORT 2013



# COMIC BOOK LEGAL DEFENSE FUND

Comic Book Legal Defense Fund is a **NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION** dedicated to the protection of the First Amendment rights of the comics art form and its community of retailers, creators, publishers, librarians, and readers. CBLDF provides legal referrals, representation, advice, assistance, and education in furtherance of these goals.

## DIRECTOR'S NOTE

CBLDF's work protecting the freedom to read comics is vital and growing!

In 2013, we've continued to make serious strides in our education program by publishing important resources and giving sought out lectures all over the world. Our work is keeping pace with the expanding interest in comics by serving a wider range of constituents than ever before.

At the same time, we've held true to our origins by responding swiftly and expertly to every First Amendment emergency we've faced — in courtrooms and communities alike. We've also offered a wider range of tools to help fight legal crises before they start.

All of this work is thanks to supporters like you whose contributions make CBLDF a Greater Force for Good!

—Charles Brownstein, Executive Director

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# A FORCE FOR JUSTICE

CBLDF started because one of our own was endangered. Michael Correa was wrongly convicted of selling obscene material after police executed a sting operation in the store where he worked. More than two decades since successfully reversing that conviction, CBLDF is still on duty to face First Amendment emergencies when they happen. For the threatened who come to us for help, CBLDF is a force for justice!

## EXPERT LEGAL ACTION

This year, CBLDF successfully responded to every legal threat that came our way, defusing each situation before it needed to go to court. That's because CBLDF's powerful legal team springs to action at the first sign of trouble. When a comics retailer, reader, or creator is facing a threat to their First Amendment rights, we're the first responders. Here's what some of the people CBLDF helped this year have to say about their experience:

*"As a local activist who publishes political cartoons, it is comforting to know that I can contact the CBLDF, as I have recently done. When self expression and citizen participation become targets, I appreciate having this resource as a tool to fight injustice and intimidation."* — MARY FLEENER

*"I am extremely fortunate to have had CBLDF to **help me fend off an assault on my artistic freedom**. Without their thorough and efficient assistance, finding for me a pro-bono legal voice in a matter of days, I might well have been forced to compromise a project which has become a vital part of my personal statement as an artist. Thank you, CBLDF!"* — JEREMY EATON

*"I was recommended to the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund after a series of threatening emails regarding the trademark application for my comic book. After the accusing company received a letter from CBLDF team, they quickly changed their posture. **If it wasn't for the CBLDF, I would have been a victim of big-company bullying** and would have lost my trademark application. I am 150% grateful to CBLDF and would recommend them to anyone in my situation. Thanks again."* — LEONARDO CRESPO

## LEGISLATIVE ACTION

CBLDF monitors legislation on an ongoing basis and brings challenges to unconstitutional laws before they can harm the comics community. In recent years, we have knocked out a wide range of unconstitutional laws that would affect retailers, readers, and librarians.

## PREVENTATIVE RESOURCES

CBLDF is committed to creating tools and presentations that prevent cases from arising in the first place. This year we continued our program of contributing to continuing legal education seminars to inform lawyers about the First Amendment issues facing comic books. We also created new tools, including a new series of FAQs, to help protect our community's rights.



# A FORCE FOR LEARNING

Comics are an increasingly important and often misunderstood aspect of 21st Century culture, which makes them the target of frequent challenges in schools and libraries. CBLDF stands up for the freedom to read comics and provides tools that protect the librarians, educators and readers who use comics as a powerful force for learning!

## ***LIBRARY ASSISTANCE***

CBLDF is a leader in protecting intellectual freedom in libraries, providing substantive aid and behind-the-scenes support when books are challenged. This year, we took action to fight attacks on dozens of books, including *Persepolis* by Marjane Satrapi by Chicago Public Schools and *Neverwhere* by Neil Gaiman in Alamogordo, New Mexico. CBLDF is helping to keep books on the shelf and empowering communities to speak up for their rights!

## ***KIDS' RIGHT TO READ PROJECT***

CBLDF is a sponsoring partner in the Kids' Right to Read Project, a coalition of organizations that monitors and responds to challenges to books in schools and libraries. As part of KRRP, we provide proactive substantive assistance to help keep comics in circulation when they are challenged. Our participation in KRRP underscores the core principle that parents have a right to choose what comics are appropriate for their children to read and that all parents should be afforded that same freedom of choice.

## ***BANNED BOOKS WEEK***

CBLDF is a sponsor of Banned Books Week, the annual celebration of the freedom to read. CBLDF.org provides a vast body of resources about how and why graphic novels are challenged, alongside tools to help libraries and citizens fight back. We also offer case studies of numerous graphic novel challenges, including classics such as *Maus*, *Watchmen*, *Stuck Rubber Baby*, *Sandman*, and *Bone*, as well as titles within popular franchises such as Batman, Dragon Ball, and Spider-Man. CBLDF's tools help individuals, libraries, and stores celebrate Banned Books Week in their communities.

## ***LECTURES AND EXHIBITIONS***

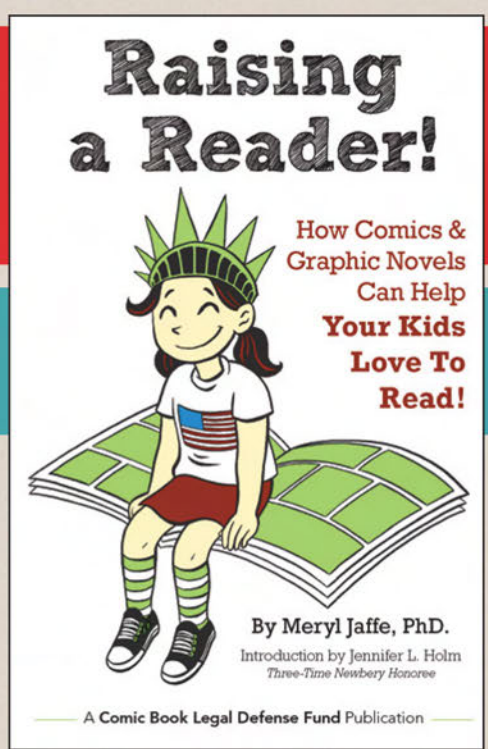
CBLDF helps educate thousands of people about comics and intellectual freedom every year with our popular lectures and exhibitions. In 2013 we presented more than 30 public education events and exhibited at more than 20 conventions. New presentations for 2013 include **"Comics on Trial,"** a multi-part history of comics censorship drawing upon the actual comics that led to the trials that defined intellectual freedom for comics; **"Protecting Manga,"** a concise primer that helps provide librarians and educators with a foundational understanding of the category; **"Banned Comics,"** an overview of what comics have been banned and challenged that we delivered in several venues during Banned Books Week; and **"The Secret Origins of Comics Censorship"** revealing new research into the truth behind Frederic Wertham's attacks on comics. CBLDF's lectures reach audiences at conventions, classrooms, colleges, and court-houses all over the world, and they make a difference in promoting a better understanding of comics and First Amendment rights!



## RESOURCES AND PUBLICATIONS

### **RAISING A READER!** **HOW COMICS & GRAPHIC NOVELS** **CAN HELP YOUR KIDS LOVE TO READ!**

*Raising A Reader!* answers the questions parents and educators bring to using comics: What skills do graphic novels offer kids? What resources are available for using graphic novels in education? How do you teach reading with a comics page? How can graphic novels create reading dialogues? And much more!



*"CBLDF's 'Raising a Reader' pamphlet is beautiful, clear, and informative — a perfect introduction to comics for parents who might not know how to support their child's reading interests or may need to be shown the benefit of comics reading for young minds."* — **JACK BAUR, PRESIDENT, BAY AREA YOUNG ADULT LIBRARIANS**

## USING GRAPHIC NOVELS IN EDUCATION

Using Graphic Novels in Education is an ongoing feature on CBLDF.org that is designed to allay confusion around the content of banned books and to help parents and teachers raise readers. In this column, we examine books that have been targeted by censors and provide teaching and discussion suggestions for the use of such books in classrooms. At least one title is covered each month, and each article includes discussion points, teaching tips, and correlations to the Common Core State Standards.

## OBSCENITY CASE FILES

This series on CBLDF.org identifies and explains the pivotal legal cases that helped define the limits of constitutionally protected speech in America. This year we explored 22 of the most important cases in defining our understanding of what constitutes obscene speech and what types of speech are granted First Amendment protection. These concise, readable articles provide context for the interested reader and a starting point for future study that's helpful to high school and college students.

## NEWS COVERAGE

CBLDF.org is a content-rich website offering a daily news blog on free expression issues. The blog covers trends in legislation, litigation, challenges to comics and graphic novels in libraries, international censorship, and other important trends. We also distribute this news through a free weekly newsletter.

## CENSORSHIP RESOURCES

CBLDF.org's Resources area offers hundreds of pages of information about current and historical comics censorship issues. Our historical resources are designed for students and casual browsers alike, providing in-depth knowledge about banned books, the history of comics censorship, the history of the Comics Code, CBLDF's case history, and cutting edge information about challenges to manga. Our current resources include Know Your Rights FAQ, a series that addresses frequently asked and misunderstood legal issues affecting the right to free expression.



# A FORCE FOR FREEDOM

Readers and retailers are increasingly at risk of prosecution for the comics they possess and sell. Manga, in particular, is under attack because of misperceptions about the medium and its content. At the same time, the generation of young Americans that has grown up on the form is increasingly at risk. CBLDF protects them with a variety of legal and educational tools that form a powerful force for freedom!

## MANGA FREEDOM

### LEGAL ACTION

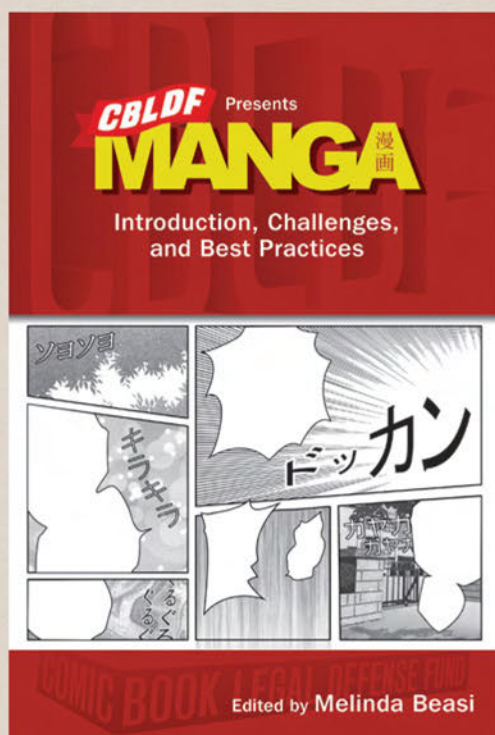
CBLDF provides substantive and monetary aid when readers of manga are prosecuted. Most recently, we successfully ended an investigation involving a manga reader in Idaho who was wrongly and maliciously accused of possessing obscene child pornography by an intimate partner. CBLDF promptly asserted the truth and made the case go away before it went to court.

### DEFENDING MANGA: THE RYAN MATHESON STORY

This year, CBLDF released *Defending Manga: The Ryan Matheson Story*, a short documentary video recounting the young American citizen's fight for justice after being wrongfully accused of criminal activity because of fantasy and humor manga on his laptop computer. Thanks to CBLDF's monetary and substantive support, all criminal charges against Ryan were dropped last year. Now viewers can see Ryan tell his story in his own words in this important documentary. CBLDF paid off \$40,000 of Ryan's legal debt and is currently fundraising to pay off the remaining \$24,000.

### CBLDF PRESENTS MANGA: INTRODUCTION, CHALLENGES, AND BEST PRACTICES

Manga is misunderstood, which is one reason why cases like Matheson's emerge. CBLDF has made a major stride in conquering misconceptions about manga by creating this important handbook. *CBLDF Presents Manga: Introduction, Challenges, and Best Practices* provides a concise and informed overview of manga — its history, genres, and issues. This educational work authored by an expert panel of writers delves into the history of manga, its major demographic divisions, its most significant creators, and the challenges it has sometimes faced in North America. It was made possible by a grant from the Gaiman Foundation and published by Dark Horse.





## INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE

Last August, CBLDF Executive Director Charles Brownstein was invited to Tokyo to deliver a series of talks on Manga Freedom. While there he addressed a standing room only audience at Comic Market (Comiket), the world's largest comics event; an international symposium; and numerous press interviews. CBLDF has also facilitated lectures and articles in the U.S. in the spirit of promoting stronger understanding and cooperation between manga fans and professionals around the world. These efforts are crucial to creating a stronger understanding of manga and advancing freedom for this popular but misunderstood art form.

*"To everyone who contributed to the CBLDF and supported me, you have my sincere gratitude. It's been a little over a year since my case ended, and although I was pretty shaken right after it ended, I've definitely recovered a lot and I feel stable and happy in my life now. Last year I accompanied the CBLDF to a few anime and comic conventions, which has really opened my eyes and given me perspective on just how amazing our community of anime, manga and comics really is. Don't ever be afraid or ashamed of the things you love! Your donations and support to the CBLDF really do help. The help I've received so far has gone above and beyond what I thought was even possible. Thank you so much!"* — **RYAN MATHESON**

## RETAILER SUPPORT

### LEGISLATIVE ACTION AND ALERTS

Retailers are the backbone of the comics business, and from the very beginning, CBLDF has worked to protect their First Amendment right to sell the full range of our industry's expression. CBLDF constantly monitors legislation that could adversely affect retailers' freedom to sell comics. We provide targeted and timely updates on changes in the law to our retailer members and bring challenges to unconstitutional laws that could affect their ability to do business.

### ADVISORIES AND RESOURCES

When threats to the retail community emerge, CBLDF creates timely advisory publications to help address them. In response to a news story targeting suggestive and violent content in recent general audience comics, CBLDF published a special advisory for managing media attacks. We also provide an annually-updated Retailer Resource Guide filled with a rich range of informative articles on best practices to aid retailers in protecting and augmenting their businesses.

### RETAILER MEMBERSHIP

In partnership with Diamond Comic Distributors and industry sponsors, CBLDF offers a dedicated retailer membership program each year. The retailer member kit includes a variety of branded incentives and substantive tools to assist retailers in protecting their rights. The industry's leading retailers are members of CBLDF and regard our work as essential to protecting the First Amendment rights they depend upon to do business.



# HOW TO HELP

*"There is no better, more respected organization in comics, nor is there a better way to becoming a more actively involved member of the comics community than joining. It's a good thing to do"*

— TOM SPURGEON, THE COMICS REPORTER

## BECOME A MEMBER

Show that you believe in the freedom to read comics by becoming a member of CBLDF. For a membership contribution of as little as \$25 a year, you can be part of the supporter community that ensures we can continue our important work to protect free expression.

## VOLUNTEER

CBLDF is a small organization that's made powerful by the contributions of our volunteers. Whether you're a student or an enthusiast, CBLDF has volunteer opportunities at our NYC home office and at conventions. If you're a writer, artist, or designer, we also need your help to create resource articles and publications like this one.

## SPREAD THE WORD

Follow us on Twitter and Facebook to learn the latest in our efforts to protect comics, and share our work with your network of friends and followers. The more people who know of our work, the better able we are to perform it!

## HOST A PRESENTATION OR EXHIBIT

Arrange for one of CBLDF's presentations to come to your school, conference, convention, or community event. Check them out on [www.cbldf.org](http://www.cbldf.org), and contact us for more information.

## DONATE

Visit our website to make a monetary contribution to our important work

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**CBLDF.org**



**FREE SPEECH IS WORTH  
FIGHTING FOR!**

