



September 11, 2013

Sent via U.S. Mail and Facsimile

Debe Terhar
President, Ohio State Board of Education
25 South Front Street
Columbus, OH 43215-4183
Fax: (614) 752-9445

Re: Censorship of African American Literature

Dear Ms. Terhar,

It has come to my attention that you have advocated for the removal of the Toni Morrison novel *The Bluest Eye* from state teaching guidelines, going so far as to label the book "pornographic."

Unfortunately, your comments are another in a long history of arguments that advocate the banning of African American literature because it is "too controversial" for schoolchildren.

Rather than removing these books, the ACLU encourages schools to use controversial literature as an opportunity to improve students' critical thinking skills and to create open dialogue between students and the community. In the case of *The Bluest Eye*, Toni Morrison seeks to promote this type of dialogue by taking a bold, unflinching look at the pain and damage that internalized racism can inflict on a young girl and her community.

With this in mind, I invite you and your fellow board members to join us on September 26 for an ACLU event in Columbus entitled *Let's Get Free: Banned Writings of Black Liberationists*. This event is part of the ACLU of Ohio's yearly celebration of Banned Books Week, a national effort launched in 1982 aimed at drawing attention to literature that has been the target of censorship. For more information, visit www.bannedbooksweek.org.

Coincidentally, our selected passages this year include the work of Toni Morrison, giving you a chance to better familiarize yourself with the important work of this Pulitzer and Nobel Prize-winning author and Ohio native.

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More information about this event is included with this letter.

Hope to see you on September 26.

Sincerely,



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Cc: John R. Kasich, Governor of Ohio
Ann E. Jacobs, District 1, Ohio State Board of Education
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Jeffrey J. Mims, Jr., District 3, Ohio State Board of Education
Bryan C. Williams, District 5, Ohio State Board of Education
Michael L. Collins, District 6, Ohio State Board of Education
Sarah Fowler, District 7, Ohio State Board of Education
Deborah Cain, District 8, Ohio State Board of Education
Stephanie Dodd, District 9, Ohio State Board of Education
Mary Rose Oakar, District 11, Ohio State Board of Education