

# FREEDOM FROM RELIGION *foundation*

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October 29, 2021

**SENT VIA U.S. MAIL AND EMAIL**

**Matt.Krause@house.texas.gov**

The Honorable Matt Krause  
Texas Representative  
Room 4S.6  
P.O. Box 2910  
Austin, TX 78768

Re: Your ignoble crusade to ban books

Dear Representative Krause:

We are writing on behalf of the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) to object to your investigation and blacklisting of 850 books. We have been contacted by one of your constituents. FFRF is a national nonprofit organization with over 36,000 members and several chapters across the country, including more than 1,500 members and a chapter in your state, with many members in your district. FFRF protects the constitutional separation between state and church and educates about nontheism.

We understand that you've launched a political search-and-destroy mission to weed from public school libraries or curriculum any books that "might make students feel discomfort, guilt, anguish, or any other form of psychological distress because of their race or sex."<sup>1</sup>

FFRF advocates, above all, for freedom of thought. We believe that there is no true freedom of thought, conscience, or even religion, unless our government and its public schools are free from religion. We are deeply familiar with the haunting history of censorship—from the Catholic Church's *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*, to the Comstock laws, to the Nazi book burnings, the attacks on authors such as Charles Darwin and Salman Rushdie, and the murders of Bangladeshi bloggers such as Avijit Roy. Recently, an evangelical preacher burned a book authored by one

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<sup>1</sup> Bill Chappell, "A Texas lawmaker is targeting 850 books," NPR (Oct. 28, 2021) at <https://n.pr/31fknCL>.

of our attorneys, reminding us of Heinrich Heine's famous observation, "Where they burn books, they will end in burning human beings."<sup>2</sup> History never looks kindly on book censors and burners.

May we suggest that, if you care about protecting children, you are looking at the wrong books?

Perhaps you should investigate books that you will find in almost every school library. One book advocates for rape victims to marry their rapists. Another tells the story of a prostitute who "lusted after her lovers, whose genitals were like those of donkeys and whose emission was like that of horses," she "longed for the lewdness of your youth, when ...[her] bosom was caressed and your young breasts fondled." Earlier, this same book speaks about sex toys: you "took the fine jewelry I gave you, the jewelry made of my gold and silver, and you made for yourself male idols and engaged in prostitution with them." Another book prays "may her breasts satisfy you always, may you ever be intoxicated with her love." In yet another, a future husband purchases a wife by killing 200 of her fathers' enemies, mutilating their corpses, and bringing back their foreskins as a dowry. Finally, one sordid and preposterous story that defames incest victims recounts the exploits of two daughters who, having just witnessed a genocide and the murder of their mother by a pyromaniacal god, supposedly get their father drunk and seduce him in order to bear his children.

These and many more unpalatable and sexually explicit stories are found in various books of the bible. This is just a sampling of such biblical imagery, specifically, Leviticus, Ezekiel, Proverbs, 1 Samuel, and Genesis. Our organization has published brochure, *An X-Rated Book: Sex & Obscenity In the Bible*, which exposes nearly 150 bible verses displaying a "pornographic view of sex and women, lewdness, depravity and sexual violence often ordered or countenanced by the biblical deity." It can be read for free on our website.<sup>3</sup>

FFRF Co-President Dan Barker has written an entire book on the evils of the bible, *GOD: The Most Unpleasant Character in All Fiction*. Chapters document "divinely" ordered genocide, infanticide, and filicide, among many other atrocities, as well as the biblical deity's racism, sexism, slavemongering and sadomasochism. This is why

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<sup>2</sup> Press release, FFRF (Oct.24, 2019) at <https://bit.ly/3pJQ2GC>.

<sup>3</sup> Available at <https://ffrf.org/component/k2/item/23733-an-x-rated-book-sex-obscenity-in-the-bible>.

FFRF gives away bible-warning labels to stick on hotel bibles saying, “Warning: Literal belief in this book may endanger your health and life.”<sup>4</sup>

The bible also condemns homosexuals to death and declares them an abomination. Where is your concern for the “discomfort, guilt, anguish, or any other form of psychological distress” that LGBTQ students might experience having such a book in their library? Where is your compassion for children of color who might read of “the Curse of Ham” and feel marginalized? Where is the empathy for non-Christians who, the bible says, should be burned and tortured for eternity, for girls who are repeatedly told that women are “unclean” and must be in subjection?

Where is your concern for nonreligious children whom the bible libels? The book you revere categorically condemns atheists, saying, “The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good. . . . no, not one.” (Psalm 14: 1-3) A recent survey found that 21 percent of Americans born after 1999 are atheist or agnostic.<sup>5</sup> Nonreligious Americans are the fastest growing segment of the U.S. population by religious identification—35 percent of Americans are non-Christians, and this includes the more than one in four Americans who now identify as religiously unaffiliated.<sup>6</sup>

But you, of course, already know about the contents of the bible. You frequently tout your position on the board of Christians Engaged and that group’s fidelity to the bible.<sup>7</sup> You write that “there’s no better textbook” for “instilling” morality than the bible<sup>8</sup> and discuss your bible study on social media.<sup>9</sup> As Thomas Paine noted in *The Age of Reason*: “Whenever we read the obscene stories, the voluptuous debaucheries, the cruel and torturous executions, the unrelenting vindictiveness, with which more than half the Bible is filled, it would be more consistent that we called it the word of a demon, than the word of God.”

You seem concerned only with protecting children from broadening their understanding of the world. A proper education, which should expose students to diverse ideas and facts, and should enlarge and develop their minds and understanding, is bound to occasionally make

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<sup>4</sup> Available at <https://ffrf.org/shop/accessories/bumper-stickers-15/bible-warning-labels-skull-crossbones-78-detail>.

<sup>5</sup> *Atheism Doubles Among Generation Z*, The Barna Group (Jan. 24, 2018), <https://www.barna.com/research/atheism-doubles-among-generation-z/>.

<sup>6</sup> Pew Research Center, “In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace,” (Oct. 17, 2019) at <https://pewrsr.ch/2VPiFS7>.

<sup>7</sup> See, e.g., <https://www.facebook.com/KrauseforTexas/posts/10159446428908119>; <https://www.facebook.com/KrauseforTexas/posts/10159406205873119>; <https://twitter.com/repmattkrause/status/1406067377159217156>.

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/KrauseforTexas/posts/10158126159938119>

<sup>9</sup> See, e.g., <https://twitter.com/RepMattKrause/status/1018867154119286784>

students “uneasy.” Growth often is uncomfortable. You seek to limit children’s growth by discouraging them from reading books other than *your* favorite so-called “holy” book, while hypocritically ignoring the bible’s abysmal moral and pedagogical failings.

We urge you to drop your farcical, hypocritical and dangerous crusade at once.

Very truly,

Handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Annie Laurie Gaylor Dan Barker". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Annie Laurie Gaylor & Dan Barker

Co-presidents

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