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Lambda Legal and LDF Urge U.S. Naval Academy to Reverse Decision to Remove 381 Books from Library Collection

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Today, [Lambda Legal](#) and the [Legal Defense Fund \(LDF\)](#) sent a letter to Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth and Superintendent Yvette M. Davids urging the U.S. Naval Academy to reverse its decision to remove 381 books discussing race, gender, and sexuality from its Nimitz Library collection. In the letter, Lambda Legal Chief Legal Officer Jennifer C. Pizer and LDF Director of Strategic Initiatives Jin Hee Lee express the organizations' deep concern over the decision—issued as a verbal order from the Defense Secretary's office—and emphasize the urgent need to reinstate the removed books to safeguard the constitutional rights of the institution's cadets.

The U.S. Naval Academy evaluated its book collection in Nimitz Library following the verbal order demanding compliance with President Donald Trump's Executive Order 14190. Accordingly, the Naval Academy reviewed 900 titles to screen for what it claims are "diversity, equity, and inclusion" topics. The list of 381 titles removed from circulation almost exclusively touch upon topics pertaining to the experiences of people of color, especially Black people, and/or LGBTQ people, including: "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings" by Maya Angelou, "Stone Fruit" by Lee Lai, "The Hate U Give" by Angie Thomas, "Lies My Teacher Told Me : Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong" by James W. Loewen, "Gender Queer: A Memoir" by Maia Kobabe, and "Democracy in Black: How Race Still Enslaves the American Soul" by Eddie S. Glaude, Jr. At the same time, the collection retained other books with messages and themes that privilege certain races and religions over others, including "The Clansman: A Historical Romance of the Ku Klux Klan" by Thomas Dixon Jr., "Mein Kampf" by Adolf Hitler, and "Heart of Darkness" by Joseph Conrad.

In the letter, Lambda Legal and LDF underscore the constitutional responsibility of the U.S. Naval Academy to protect cadets' right to receive information and the danger of censoring materials based on viewpoints disfavored by the current Administration. The organizations also emphasize the importance of reading and engaging with varying viewpoints from diverse authors, particularly writers from historically marginalized communities, as a key to developing critical thinking, empathy, intellectual agility, and preparing them to engage thoughtfully and responsibly with topics that reflect the rich diversity of our nation.

“The decision of the Naval Academy to strip the Nimitz Library of diverse voices and viewpoints, especially those written by and/or about Black and LGBTQ people, constitutes unconstitutional censorship of politically disfavored ideas in direct conflict with a functioning democracy,” said **Lambda Legal Chief Legal Officer Jennifer C. Pizer** and **Jin Hee Lee, LDF Director of Strategic Initiatives** in the letter. “Such censorship is especially dangerous in an educational setting, where critical inquiry, intellectual diversity, and exposure to a wide array of perspectives are necessary to educate future citizen-leaders. While the Naval Academy is tasked with educating and cultivating cadets to be leaders of a pluralistic nation, it has done a disservice to cadets by preventing access to critical information.”

View the full letter here: https://lambdalegal.org/legal_document/us_20250415_letter-defense-secretary-hegseth-superintendent-davids-on-removing-books-from-naval-academy-library/

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