



# NEWS

For Immediate Release

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## Banned Books Reading Marks Eleventh Anniversary

Pittsburgh – The Greater Pittsburgh Chapter of the ACLU-PA, Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh and WYEP 91.3 FM will present the 11<sup>th</sup> annual “Banned Books Reading” on Monday, September 25, 2006 at 7:00 pm in the Carnegie Library Lecture Hall in Oakland. Pittsburgh is one of many cities that celebrate the freedom to read with special events during Banned Books Week (BBW), September 23-30, 2006. BBW is observed each year to remind Americans not to take this precious democratic freedom for granted. The “Banned Books Reading” is designed to celebrate the First Amendment and educate citizens about the dangers of censorship. The event features local personalities reading from their favorite banned or challenged books.

This year’s talented cast includes emcee Lynn Cullen, radio talk show host with WPTT 1360 AM; Omar-Abdul Lawrence, with the League of Young Voters and one the area’s most popular hip-hop DJ/musicians; Chris Rawson, theatre critic with the Pittsburgh Post Gazette; Harish Saluja, an independent filmmaker, Director of the Silk Screen Festival and co-host of *Music From India* on WDUQ-FM; Justin Sane, member of the internationally popular band Anti-Flag; and Sala Udin, former Pittsburgh City Councilman and president of the Pittsburgh CORO Center for Civic Leadership.

More than a book a day faces expulsion from U.S. libraries every year. There have been more than 8,700 attempts since the American Library Association (ALA) began electronically compiling data on book challenges in 1989. The ALA Office of Intellectual Freedom documented 405 challenges in 2005. A challenge is defined as a formal written complaint, filed with a library or school, requesting that materials be removed because of content or appropriateness.

Although official challenges were down this year and most of the targets of the attempted bannings were not ultimately banned, Pittsburgh ACLU Director Barb Feige points out the need to stay vigilant against any attempts at censorship. “Most challenges fail because of the quick response by librarians, community leaders and organizations like the ACLU. The “Banned Books Reading” teaches the importance of our First Amendment rights and draws attention to the danger that exists when restraints are imposed on the availability of information in a free society.”

Monday’s event will also feature the premiere of video clips featuring Pittsburghers of all ages reciting passages from challenged and banned books. The readings were filmed on the sidewalks of Pittsburgh’s famous neighborhoods throughout the summer of 2006. “Video participants were often shocked that their most beloved books had been targeted by censors, and they couldn’t wait to proudly recite a ‘controversial’ line for the project,” reports Bruce Boni, Pittsburgh ACLU Vice President of Programs and Public Education. “People often don’t truly appreciate the First Amendment until something they love is threatened,” Mr. Boni added. Additional video readings and some outtakes will also be posted on the ACLU-PA website.

The Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh will also present a Banned Books Week event for teens on Sunday, September 24<sup>th</sup> at 2:00 pm at the main branch in Oakland. The teen event will address censorship issues that impact the everyday lives of young people, including the growing challenges to DVDs, videogames and online information available to teens through public libraries.

All BBW events are free and open to the general public. For more information, call the Pittsburgh office of the ACLU-PA at 412.681.7736 or email [bannedbooks@aclupgh.org](mailto:bannedbooks@aclupgh.org).

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