



Lafayette Citizens Against Censorship (LCAC) strongly condemns the recent decision by Lafayette Public Library Director Danny Gillane to ban displays deemed “political” or representative of “populations.” Besides the subjective nature of what becomes “acceptable” to display under this new order, this decision and the rationale provided demonstrate conflict avoidance and an attitude of appeasement towards far-right factions in our community. Further, any action taken that bans specific materials from being displayed constitutes self-censorship, and no public library director, specifically one who was hired into a library system which was recognized as the best in Louisiana under the previous director’s leadership, should be negotiating or conceding principles which are the bedrock of American public libraries and First Amendment rights.

Mr. Gillane has provided several reasons for his decision, one of which was the alleged controversy certain displays may generate. Although the last complaint about Pride displays was voiced nearly a year ago by the former Mayor-President Board appointee, Hilda Edmond, Mr. Gillane seized on that narrative as a justification for his decision, claiming that controversial books on displays would increase the likelihood of requests for removal. However, in another interview, Gillane explained that it was about not signaling out portions of the local “population,” a statement both ambiguous and troublesome. Because there is a small contingent of individuals in the Parish who do not believe in equality and respect for all “populations,” is the solution a sweeping cancellation of all displays that qualify under this general term? In yet another article, Gillane indicates that this decision was made right before Pride Month, as he “knew” there would be “issues” with Pride displays. But in a different interview, he claims that the timing of this

decision and the start of Pride Month was simply coincidental. The lack of consistency among these explanations provides tenuous trust that this decision was actually made with a clear purpose in mind.

With this decision, Mr. Gillane has fallen into a trap of conflict avoidance and appeasement. In several statements, he indicates he doesn't want a "fight." His goal of removing the Library from "culture war issues" fails to understand that when these wars involve attempted marginalization of whole populations and censorship of materials, it is part of the Library's collection development policy to stand strong for Library and American Library Association (ALA) principles, not recuse itself from conflict. While keeping the peace is sometimes the best course of action, past decisions made by Gillane show that this is another unnecessary change of policy in an attempt to keep a small contingent happy, an unattainable goal when extremist views are involved. He would like to keep the focus on the fact that no books or materials have actually been banned or placed behind a desk, but he mistakenly views his decision as the saving grace for the materials. We have seen in the past year that people will challenge materials they find on hate-group lists, or will simply target materials for their content, regardless of whether the material has been on a display.

Giving select materials preferential placement in the form of displays while forbidding display of other materials, is, in our opinion, not providing equitable access according to ALA's statements on Intellectual Freedom and Access to Resources. Mr. Gillane is assuming that people who want to find materials not permitted for display will be able to use the online catalog to do so, but he does not take into account the technical challenges this may pose for some, or explain why it is equitable that someone looking for poetry books may be able to easily find them on a display, while someone researching Black History, even during February, will need to take multiple steps to achieve the same goal. Although all materials may in theory be in the Library, it is evident from numerous articles on the topic that displays are an important tool for highlighting and encouraging circulation of collections, much like merchandising is for grocery stores and other businesses. Decisions about material purchases and purges are also partially made based on circulation numbers, enforcing the need for diverse and creative displays which give all materials a chance to be highlighted. Mr. Gillane's statement to one concerned patron that "Library displays of the

nature of your concern [i.e. the ones Mr. Gillane has banned] are not universal in public libraries," is misleading. While every single Library in the United States may not have displays, to indicate that somehow displays on topics interwoven into American culture, such as Black History, are less common or allowed than a display on fairy tales, just does not seem to be supported with facts. We request Mr. Gillane to provide more documentation on his assertion.

Gillane seems to have drawn himself the hero, doing the best he can under dire circumstances. However, regardless of his intentions, at present he is simply doing the far-right's bidding and validating hateful views; at best trying to buy time by negotiating with individuals who have a track record of being unreasonable and disingenuous. Whatever his own personal morals and beliefs, citizens are seeing only his actions. Whether these actions are being committed by someone with a sincere belief in our Library system or a nefarious individual brought in by an extremist Board member hardly matters. The outcome - a Library system which is a shell of its former self - is the same. Mr. Gillane, if he does sincerely uphold ALA principles, should either resign before he finds himself the main culprit of the Library's downfall, or else find the courage to stand up for all collections equally, whether the topic is LGBTQ+ or children's nursery rhymes. If Mr. Gillane needs tools to better defend the Library system from censorship, ALA has a free [toolkit](#) for exactly that purpose.

LCAC urges Mr. Gillane to reverse this decision which has only served to draw condemnation from numerous community groups and individuals, and has again put Lafayette Parish in an unfavorable light once the story was picked up by national news. If his goal with the display bans was to ensure focus on Summer Reading and away from controversy, he should recognize by now that his decision has had the opposite effect.

For more information or inquiries, please visit our website at www.lacitizensagainstcensorship.org or contact us at lafcitizensagainstcensorship@gmail.com.

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