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JONATHAN TURLEY **(https://jonathanturley.org/)**

Res ipsa loquitur – The thing itself speaks



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September 20, 2020 (https://jonathanturley.org/2020/09/20/rowlings-books-burned-or-banned-around-the-world-over-her-personal-views-of-gender/)

Rowling's Books Burned or Banned Around the World Over Her Personal Views Of Gender

[\(https://jonathanturley.org/2020/09/20/rowlings-books-burned-or-banned-around-the-world-over-her-personal-views-of-gender/\)](https://jonathanturley.org/2020/09/20/rowlings-books-burned-or-banned-around-the-world-over-her-personal-views-of-gender/)



<https://io.wp.com/jonathanturley.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/1506px-1933-may-10-berlin-book-burning.jpg?ssl=1>) In Harry Potter, Albus Dumbledore told the students of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry that “It takes a great deal of bravery to stand up to our enemies, but just as much to stand up to our friends.” Many are learning the truth of that line written by famed author JK Rowling as self-described progressives burn her books or ban them from shelves because she personally holds an opposing view of gender (<https://www.jkrowling.com/opinions/j-k-rowling-writes-about-her-reasons-for-speaking-out-on-sex-and-gender-issues/>). Much like the boycott movement of Chick-Fil-A over comments by its CEO (<https://jonathanturley.org/2020/09/13/faa-reportedly-rules-for-chick-fil-a-over-san-antonio-airport-concession/>), people are seeking to punish Rowling through attacks on her literature. We previously discussed the embracing of art destruction (<https://jonathanturley.org/2020/07/10/people-will-do-what-they-do-pelosi-refuses-to-condemn-statue-destruction/>), as analogous to book burning, but now actual book burning is being embraced as a weapon of the woke.

A TikTok (<https://www.newsweek.com/topic/tiktok>) series show people around the world burning copies of Rowlings' books. In one video of a burning pile of books by TikTok user @elmcd0, a voice is heard saying

"You have to stop using 'death of the author' as an excuse to have your cake and eat it too. While the reader's perspective is an important part of interpretation and meaning, it is impossible to completely divorce a work from its creator. The positive impact that J.K. Rowling's work had on millions of readers does not negate how her hateful lobbying has affected the trans community."

That sums up the logic of every book burner in history. You cannot read a book because of the views or religion or identity of the author. It is better to burn the book to protect society.

Then there is Rabble Books and Games in Maylands, Perth. The owner owner Nat Latter proudly declared on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/rabblebg>) that he had removed all fo the Harry Potter books from bookshelves to guarantee "a safer space for our community." So you can buy a Rowlings book by having it retrieved from behind the back room like pornography. It is a form of censoring by making it more difficult to buy some books rather than others because you disfavor authors with opposing views. Latter seems to relish the role of a book censoring book seller:

"Whilst stocking a book isn't an endorsement (good grief, that would be a minefield), and we will always take orders for books that aren't in stock, there are more worthy books to put on the shelf, books that don't harm communities and won't make us sad to unpack them."


Does Latter also hide works with opposing views on gender from the Bible to the Koran to classic novels? Indeed, why not pull all of the work of authors like Hemingway and others for their views of women or race relations or other issues? Book sellers used to be people who wants to be gateways to knowledge and a world of different ideas and values. Now readers are being protected from even seeing the name of an author who personally holds opposing or offensive views.


What is most disturbing is not the flawed rhetoric of these individuals in justifying book burning and speech regulation but the relative silence from communities as a whole. We have seen increasing pressure to regulate art (<https://jonathanturley.org/2020/07/15/leading-curator-resigns-after-being-denounced-as-a-white-supremacist-for-refusing-to-bar-acquisitions-by-white-artists/>), based on the identity or gender of artists. Authors often hold unpopular views from society as a whole. Many are deeply religious or hold narrow views of certain social institutions or rights. These views are often not reflected in their art or writings. Indeed, Rowlings is viewed as extremely liberal but holds a narrow view of gender. We can debate her on those views and denounce those that we find hateful or intolerant. However, burning or banning or hiding books (or destroying art) is the ultimate attack on free speech. It is the signature of oppression from the China's Qin Dynasty (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Qin_Dynasty) to the Nazis to Southern segregationists. Saying that you are different because you are acting in defense of others is a transparently weak rationalization. Declaring intolerance in the name of tolerance captures the very illogic of book burning.


Thankfully, this remains a small minority of activists but there is a more pronounced anti-free speech movement growing in this and other countries (<https://jonathanturley.org/2020/08/04/turley-testifies-in-senate-on-antifa-and-the-anti-free-speech-movement-in-the-united-states/>).


These actions only prove again what Albus Dumbledore said (and J.K. Rowling wrote): "Dark times lie ahead of us and there will be a time when we must choose between what is easy and what is right."

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