

I've pasted a statement about the ANNIE case to the end of this email. I've talked about the case and what led up to it many times to many groups of librarians, teachers, etc., as you know, and it's in those speeches (and some of the references appended to the statement below, some of which you may have or may have access to) that the more personal accounts of my experiences and what I did about the attempted censorship appears. I'm in Maine now, finishing up work on a loooooong (as yet unsold) novel I've been working on forever (about homeless LGBTQ kids) and won't be back in Massachusetts till mid-October. If you need the more personal stuff, I could probably dig out one of my old speeches, and send that part of it to you.

The statement pasted below is one I've sent to many college and high school students working on papers re censorship or on ANNIE specifically.

Nancy

---

In 1993, 11 years after it was published, ANNIE and a book by Frank Mosca called ALL AMERICAN BOYS were donated (unbeknownst to me) to 42 schools in and around Kansas City, Kansas and Missouri, by a gay organization called Project 21 which seeks to encourage schools to include accurate information about homosexuality in their libraries and curricula. The donation sparked a certain amount of coverage in the press, and a fundamentalist minister burned a copy of ANNIE on the steps of the building housing the Kansas City School Board, which also sparked a certain amount of coverage. At that point, I learned about what was going on and was, naturally, stunned! Some schools returned the donations, which they of course had the right to do; some kept them -- and others, upon discovering they'd had copies of ANNIE on their shelves for years, decided to remove them. That, rightly, led to cries of censorship. There were letters to the editor on both sides, discussions on radio talk shows, and angry school board meetings. Librarians and kids protested the removal vehemently.

The whole business came to a head in Olathe, Kansas, where the librarians and kids were especially upset, persistent, and courageous. When the school board kept refusing to restore the book to the district's school libraries, the kids decided to sue -- and sue they did, in Federal District Court, for violation of their First and Fourteenth Amendment rights. The American Civil Liberties Union supported the suit, as did the American Library Association. The case finally went to trial in 1995, and the judge ultimately ruled that ANNIE had been "unconstitutionally removed" from the libraries, and ordered it returned. (My partner and I made three trips to Kansas City during the whole affair, and met many wonderful, brave people who were dedicated to the First Amendment. I made speeches, was on talk shows and a panel, and testified at the trial that finally ensued.)

The school board didn't appeal, and the book was returned to the libraries, but the school board demanded a change in the district's libraries' selection policies, and unfortunately since then, has turned down purchases of other gay books for kids, despite continued objections from at least one of the librarians involved in the case.

That's the situation in a nutshell. Here's a list of references if you want more:

Articles mentioning or about ANNIE include Jenkins, Christine, "Heartthrobs & Heartbreaks: A Guide to Young Adult Books with Gay Themes," OUT/LOOK, Fall, 1988; Ford, Michael Thomas, "Gay Books for Young Readers," PUBLISHERS WEEKLY, 2/21/94; Garden, Nancy, "RE: Inking: Annie on My Mind," HOT WIRE, July 1988; Garden, Nancy, "VOYA Interview with Nancy Garden," VOYA: VOICE OF YOUTH ADVOCATES February 1983, "Burned in Kansas" by Elaine Alphin, Children's Writer, June, 2001, "Hope and Irony: Annie on My Mind," by William Broz, English Journal, July, 2001; "Out of the Closet" by Kate Pavao, PUBLISHERS WEEKLY, December 2003, and others.

The lawsuit spawned many articles, mentions, etc. (Ford's article, above, mentions the lawsuit, but other issues as well, as I remember). Some of those are: SCHOOL LIBRARY JOURNAL (SLJ), 10/95, News, pg 10, "Battles Over Books Usher In New School Year"; SLJ, 1/96, Editorial; also pg. 13, "Annie Goes Back to School"; SLJ, 2/96, Editorial; also News in Brief: "Getting Around ANNIE"; SLJ, 4/96, "Annie's Day in Court," by Randy Meyer. BOOKLIST, 9/15/94, "Annie...Still on Our Minds" by Michael Cart; BOOKLIST, 4/15/96, "Carte Blanche" (column) by Michael Cart; VOYA: VOICE OF YOUTH ADVOCATES, 2/96, "Good News for Annie"; VOYA, 6/96, "Annie on Trial: How It Feels to be the Author of a Challenged Book" by Nancy Garden; CHILDREN'S BOOK INSIDER (CBI), 12/95, "From the Editor," CBI, 1/96, "From the Editor"; AMERICAN LIBRARIES, 1/96, Censorship Roundup: "Annie on the Shelf"; WASHINGTON BLADE (WB), 12/15/95, Legal Briefs: "Annie on the Bookshelf"; WB, 1/12/96, Legal Briefs: "Annie Gets Her Shelf Space"; NATIONAL COALITION AGAINST CENSORSHIP Newsletter, Spring, 1996, News and Update: "Victory in Kansas"; FREEDOM TO READ FOUNDATION NEWS, Vol.20, #3-4, 1995, "Censorship Is NOT Alive and Well and Living in Kansas: A Victory for the Freedom to Read" -- and others -- including extensive coverage in the Kansas City STAR, the Olathe (Kansas) DAILY NEWS, and a couple of other Kansas/Missouri papers (the STAR's coverage starts in the fall of 1993); CHILDREN'S WRITER, June 2001, "Burned in Kansas" by Elaine Marie Alphin.