

The Constitution Protects My Right to Read

Since I was little, I've always loved to read. I fondly remember my mom carting me around in grocery stores while I read a book from the library or my dad giving me a copy of his favorite book, *The Hobbit*. The first book I ever loved was Lewis Carol's *Alice In Wonderland*, my copy torn tattered after at least fifteen reads. Reading *Who Was Harriet Tubman* when I was seven taught me about bravery and led me to idolize Tubman for years to come. Reading Stephen Kinzer's *A Thousand Hills* gave me lasting knowledge of Rwandan genocide and led me to read Malala Yousafzai's *I am Malala*. It is because of the countless things I've learned intellectually and emotionally through books that when I think of being governed without a say, I immediately think of book banning in public schools in Florida. My home state is the leading state in banning books, twisting the words of authors and the pages of novels into something that needs to be censored, instead of leaving it up to educators. Books teach people things, about life, emotions, problem solving, world events, culture. They should not be filtered to teach things through a specific lens. Students are governed without a say in their education or access to resources. The banning of books is a page out of Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*.

In the First Amendment, the Constitution establishes the right of free speech and free press. "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press..." (Amendment 1). The First Amendment protects the people under governance because it gives them a say. While acknowledging that book banning is a complex political issue that causes much dispute, in my opinion and experience, speech and press conveyed through books are a right to the people. For example, when I read *Anne Frank The Diary of a Young Girl*, a book now banned, I learned greatly about Holocaust history as a Jewish American. Freedom of Speech gives others the right

to consume said speech. The words of others educate. Another right given to the Americans under the First Amendment is the freedom to assemble. "... or the right of then people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances" (Amendment 1). If the rights of speech or press are violated, it is parents' and students' right to assemble in protest of the book banning, rather than be governed without a say. Considering students follow the government of school every day they attend, we should have a say in what we are allowed to learn.

The Ninth Amendment recognizes other rights that are not explicitly mentioned in the Constitution. Amendment Nine states, "The enumeration in the Constitution, of certain rights, shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people." This amendment essentially states that rights are not limited to the Bill of Rights nor the Constitution; Americans have unspecified rights. The right to a nonbiased education could be supported by the ninth Amendment if it is valued as an unenumerated right. A nonbiased education means resisting the banning of books such as *The Indian Removal ACT and the Trail of Tears*. It is a freedom, right, and duty to educate kids with all sources educators deem necessary. The Ninth Amendment backs my right to have access to books as resources, with history from all perspectives, which informatively engages and encourages critical thinking.

The Tenth Amendment recognizes the delegation of power. "The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people." This amendment gives the right for the people to govern themselves through representatives, the true meaning of democracy. The "representatives" are my teachers, and the students are the "people" being taught and governed. Leaving the decision up to higher political positions that are not directly involved with students creates another form

of governance without a say. For example, my teacher's decision for my class to read *The Watsons Go to Birmingham* before it was banned was a decision based on how the book applied to a coming-of-age period in our lives mixed with valuable historical background. Something students now don't have access to through their teachers. Governance without a say is being taught a curriculum through a filter.

"Taxation without representation" or "governance without a say" applies to kids everywhere in any aspect of life. Even though I would like to see less censorship on books, I have immense gratitude and respect for my current education and for the freedom I have. The Constitution effectively guarantees rights for the people, while remaining up for interpretation, giving the ability to change in the future and mold with time. It is for this reason that I hope future generations with governance over their learning have a greater say.