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LDF and Lambda Legal Urge U.S. Naval Academy to Reverse Decision to Remove 381 Books from Library Collection

Today, the [Legal Defense Fund \(LDF\)](#) and [Lambda Legal](#) sent a [letter](#) to Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth and Superintendent Yvette M. Davids urging the U.S. Naval Academy to reverse its decision to remove 381 books discussing race, gender, and sexuality from its Nimitz Library collection. In the letter, LDF Director of Strategic Initiatives Jin Hee Lee and Lambda Legal Chief Legal Officer Jennifer C. Pizer express the organizations' deep concern over the decision—issued as a verbal order from the Defense Secretary's office—and emphasize the urgent need to reinstate the removed books to safeguard the constitutional rights of the institution's cadets.

The U.S. Naval Academy evaluated its book collection in Nimitz Library following the verbal order demanding compliance with President Donald Trump's Executive Order 14190. Accordingly, the Naval Academy reviewed 900 titles to screen for what it claims are "diversity, equity, and inclusion" topics. The list of 381 titles removed from circulation almost exclusively touch upon topics pertaining to the experiences of people of color, especially Black people, and/or LGBTQ people, including: *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* by Maya Angelou, *Stone Fruit* by Lee Lai, *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas, *Lies My Teacher Told Me : Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong* by James W. Loewen, *Gender Queer: A Memoir* by Maia Kobabe, and *Democracy in Black: How Race Still Enslaves the American Soul* by Eddie S. Glaude, Jr. At the same time, the collection retained other books with messages and themes that privilege certain races and religions over others, including *The Clansman: A Historical Romance of the Ku Klux Klan* by Thomas Dixon Jr., *Mein Kampf* by Adolf Hitler, and *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad.

In the letter, LDF and Lambda Legal underscore the constitutional responsibility of the U.S. Naval Academy to protect cadets' right to receive information and the danger of censoring materials based on viewpoints disfavored by the current Administration. The organizations also emphasize the importance of reading and engaging with varying viewpoints from diverse authors, particularly writers from historically marginalized communities, as a key to developing critical thinking, empathy, intellectual agility, and preparing them to engage thoughtfully and responsibly with topics that reflect the rich diversity of our nation.

"The decision of the Naval Academy to strip the Nimitz Library of diverse voices and viewpoints, especially those written by and/or about Black and LGBTQ people, constitutes unconstitutional censorship of politically disfavored ideas in direct conflict with a functioning democracy," said **Jin Hee Lee, LDF Director of Strategic Initiatives** and **Lambda Legal Chief Legal**

Officer Jennifer C. Pizer in the letter. “Such censorship is especially dangerous in an educational setting, where critical inquiry, intellectual diversity, and exposure to a wide array of perspectives are necessary to educate future citizen-leaders. While the Naval Academy is tasked with educating and cultivating cadets to be leaders of a pluralistic nation, it has done a disservice to cadets by preventing access to critical information.”

View the full letter [here](#).

Learn more about LDF’s efforts to protect truth and inclusivity in education [here](#).

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Founded in 1940, the [Legal Defense Fund \(LDF\)](#) is the nation’s first civil rights law organization. LDF’s Thurgood Marshall Institute is a multi-disciplinary and collaborative hub within LDF that launches targeted campaigns and undertakes innovative research to shape the civil rights narrative. In media attributions, please refer to us as the Legal Defense Fund or LDF. Please note that LDF has been completely separate from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) since 1957—although LDF was originally founded by the NAACP and shares its commitment to equal rights.

[Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, Inc.](#) is the nation’s oldest and largest legal organization committed to achieving full recognition of the civil rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people and everyone living with HIV through impact litigation, education, and policy advocacy. Lambda Legal has been instrumental in securing landmark legal victories for LGBTQ+ people and people living with HIV, including the right to marriage equality and broad protections against discrimination. Lambda Legal frequently advocates for the right of LGBTQ+ students to full recognition and participation in schools. Lambda Legal believes all students benefit from access to diverse and varied viewpoints and opposes any attempt to cast a pall of orthodoxy over the nation’s classrooms.