

I am a professional librarian who has lived and worked in the state of North Dakota for 32 years. I realize that many North Dakotans rightly prize their freedoms. I prize them, too. One of the most precious freedoms to me is the freedom to read – regardless of topic or whether someone else might be offended by what I, as an individual, choose to read.

Free people read and learn freely. One of the emerging tactics of those who oppose any form of what they fear might be related to critical race theory (which frequently has nothing to do with a graduate-level legal interpretive theory), is blacklisting books for children and teens. This is antithetical to the principles on which our country was founded. Authors have the right to speak and to be read. Students need to be able to read freely to learn the truth and facts of our nation's history, even when those facts are not easy to face.

It is a fact that the US Constitution at first viewed black individuals as being only 3/5 human.

It is a fact that the GI Bill benefits were largely unavailable to black veterans due to the lack of Federal enforcement, state-based Jim Crow laws, and private bank redlining practices.

It is a fact that the majority of people of color are the targets of racist words and acts before age 10—the very ages that this bill seeks to ban any teaching regarding racism.

It is a fact that many of the indigenous peoples in our region were deprived of their land—already greatly reduced from the original reservation boundaries—through fraud and theft in the allotment system.

Children and teens deserve to know the truth and full scope of the story of our country and of ALL of its inhabitants. To do this, they need to be able to read widely and from a multitude of perspectives. This legislation, if not openly eliminating the freedom to read, has a chilling effect on our young citizen's ability to read, learn, and discover for themselves.

Free people read freely. Preserve that freedom for our students.

Sincerely,

Beth E. Postema

902 7 ST S

Fargo, ND 58103