

I have a dream: that books be set free!

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Abstract

Martin Luther King Jr.'s dream revolved around equality among people with different skin colours and cultural backgrounds in mainstream white America. Despite this, the underlying motivation was freedom: freedom of speech, of thought, of expression, of movement, freedom to access education, libraries and books. However, books have always been at the heart of freedom-restricting, authoritarian, dictatorial, alas, irrational regimes. From a historical perspective, we can refer to numerous events where people's access to information was to be limited (Eliot & Rose, 2007). Such examples are: the burning of Confucius's books by Qin Shi Huang in the 3rd c. BCE or of the Library of Alexandria by Caliph Omar in 642 CE (Freedom to Read, online, s.d.), but, fast-forwarding to the 20th century, we have the Nazi book-burnings (Lewy, 2016) and, even more recently, restrictions in the access to social media. These cases provide us with the background against which I aim to discuss a current trend called "banned books" in the USA, according to which certain US states forbid specific books from being read, analysed and discussed at schools and their presence in the respective libraries (ALA, 2021). In my presentation, I will seek to put forth examples of banned books in the USA, from literature classics to more contemporary ones, and identify the reasons for their ban. Ultimately, attention must be paid to the awareness movement developed by a coalition of organisations, among which the American Library Association, which celebrate yearly the Banned Books Week since 1982 and pinpoint the books that were targeted by this anti-democratic decision to censor people's freedom to leisureable and varied readings.

Keywords: freedom of education; freedom of information; censorship; book burnings; banned books.

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Biodata

Cláudia Martins was awarded her PhD in Translation by the University of Aveiro, with a thesis on museum accessibility for the blind and visually-impaired. She also

holds a bachelor's degree in Modern Languages and Literatures, branch of Portuguese and English Studies, and a master in Terminology and Translation, both at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities of the University of Porto, Portugal. She has been teaching English as a foreign language, English Linguistics, Terminology and Audiovisual Translation at the School of Education in the Polytechnic Institute of Bragança, Portugal, since 2001. Academic interests: Linguistics, Terminology, Translation Studies, and Phraseology and Paremiology.