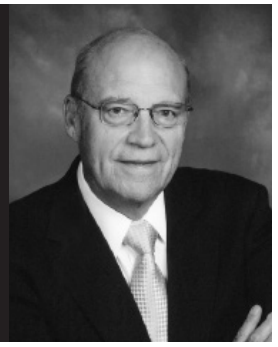




Dr. Fred Schwarz

The Schwarz Report



Dr. David Noebel

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Decline of the West

by Richard Rail

Frank Miele, editor of the *Daily Inter Lake*, devotes three columns to the unraveling of our civilization in an effort to explain why it happened. His columns are well worth your time.

I date the beginning of the unwinding of Western civilization to the early twentieth century, when Italian communist Antonio Gramsci advised his fellows that they needed to effect a “long march through the institutions” of the West in order to convert the whole world to communism via education. Soon came the Red Scare of the early twenties, when the West (rightly) feared being undermined by disciples of the nascent Bolshevik Revolution going out into the world.

Early signposts that these movements were succeeding included the 1950 trial of Alger Hiss and Whittaker Chambers’s subsequent publication of *Witness*, which told us in plain words about the conspiracy in plain sight going on before us. Harry White and Hiss were close confidants of FDR, and both were communists working for Stalin. McCarthy had it right, and history has never forgiven him for it.

The so-called New Left in the sixties continued the subversion by putting it into the streets to delegitimize the extant order. The Establishment encountered a major problem in defending itself intellectually: that generation had never seriously questioned its values. America had, after all, just won the worst war in history and that was clearly good. Yet college professors, whom we thought the smart ones, were telling us we were evil and our kids were right. Helped along in self-doubt by the questionable wisdom of the Vietnam War and the obvious issue of black civil rights, many doubted the moral rectitude of Western civilization. That doubt had still not been cleared up when the Nixon matter threw the country into still another bout of self-doubt.

The subversives stayed at it in the universities, sneakily removing the once required subject of Western civilization and replacing it with leftist ideology camouflaged as civics. The Western literary canon came under attack by feminists, another flavor of socialist. Hollywood got into the act with the likes of Oliver Stone presenting America as the land of the greedy and the home of the evil. Bit by bit, the planks that had built Western civilization, the predicate of its intellectual defense, were pulled up and replaced with Marxist junk. Rather than the close, tight reasoning of Locke, Montesquieu, Madison, et al., our kids were learning to whine the trite tripe tropes of the left.

Came the nineties and the Clintons. Far from ideologues, they were just crooks. That made the work of the subversives even easier, since many who felt uncomfortable with Marxism readily understood the value of under-the-table bucks and secure congressional sinecures. All of this is hidden by the rubric of socialism and backed by the power of the ever growing state.

America had long since kicked God out of the schools. It wasn’t obvious to most at the time, but that was the prelude for all that followed since even the mention of God came to be verboten. This is too bad, because the more complicated society became, the more we needed God. The fact is that understanding God and what He wants of us is far more demanding than understanding Marxism. The complexity of human psychology exceeds anything most of us can even imagine.

By contrast, the allure of socialism or communism has always been its simplicity and superficial reasoning. Those very characteristics make it a perfect cover for criminality on the large scale. Those who fall for its siren song are largely young and inexperienced. Having always been protected, they don’t see humanity’s flawed (sinful) nature and are vulnerable to Marxist “perfectibility of man” thinking.

The Marxist allure usually comes at a young person at just the point in his psychological development where he is

breaking away from home. It's a confusing time of life when one is trying to make sense of it all. He's naïve without being aware of it. He's ready to follow someone without being aware of it. That requires a loosening of ties to what went before, in order to grow into the new skin of his new self. And here beckons Marxism with easy, ready answers. Only years later, if he's a thinking person, will he begin to see what he so glibly zipped past early on.

All this is the natural result of a society growing wealthy. The young don't have to work as hard to make it. Things seem easy because they are easy. And it's so easy to attribute one's success to one's own brilliance. Who needs God in this easy world?

In this process, we see why civilizations fall. Cocky and lazy, elites sink into immorality and drop their moral guard. Watching it happen is why so many great writers return, toward the end of their lives, to the religion of their youth. They finally grasp the astonishing complexity of the human condition and the unknowable, amazing mind of God, so far beyond our grasp that calling it "genius" smacks of the childish.

Frank Miele is right. We need not only a return to belief in God, but also a rededication to thinking about Him, studying Him, talking about Him, giving Him proper respect. One imagines God looking at the hash man has made of the many gifts He gave us and wondering why He ever bothered.

—*American Thinker*, March 9, 2018

Insanity

by Fay Voshell

Somewhere out in cyberspace, there is a cartoon portraying two salamanders sitting on a rock while having a conversation. One of the critters says, "In the lost city of Atlantis, I was Shirley MacLaine."

A little background to the joke: Ms. MacLaine was interviewed by Matt Lauer a few years ago. She talked about her remarkable long-term memory, which was so accurate that she could recall her former identity as a citizen of the lost city of Atlantis.

We'll leave the ironies inherent in the juxtaposition of the now disgraced and nearly invisible Mr. Lauer and Ms. MacLaine to be unraveled for another day. We'll merely note that Ms. MacLaine's belief in her former life as a citizen in Atlantis was not questioned by Mr. Lauer, who gave her credence because

of her fame, longevity, and acting skills. It seemed that he believed her because her feelings about her former life in Atlantis were strong and deep. She was spouting nonsense but was being taken seriously by Lauer, who asked no questions, required no facts, demanded no proof. MacLaine's sincere conviction apparently was enough to validate her fantasies.

Lauer gave absolutely no hint if he thought Ms. MacLaine was crazy, though not too long ago, Ms. MacLaine would be considered mad, or at least compassionately recognized as a victim of senile dementia. She would have been regarded much as an elderly man who claims he is Napoleon Bonaparte reincarnated. Such a man certainly would not be taken seriously, much less granted an interview on national TV.

At least not so far.

We should be glad that people with senile dementia or other severe mental problems are not treated as badly as they were in the not so distant past. But lately, a new and dangerous form of thinking about mental illness has arisen—one in which those formerly considered insane are now considered normal or at least trendy, and one in which sane religious folk are considered nutcases unworthy of public office or other positions of responsibility. To put it another way, what was once considered mad is now deemed sane, while people once considered sane are now the ones attacked as being mad as hatters and as vicious haters.

For some time, it has been in vogue among the left to consider Christianity itself an insane belief system. Certainly, such seems to be the case for some of the talking heads on ABC's *The View*. According to Joy Behar, one of the most dangerously insane people in the United States is the vice president of the United States, Mike Pence.

Let's be frank: a well known spokeswoman has so thoroughly absorbed the left's definition of insanity that she believes she can trash without consequence a good man whose core beliefs are based on beliefs held by Judaism and Christianity for over four thousand years. Of course, she would never dream of trashing the Muslim mayor of London in a similar manner.

The fault in Behar's stars lies with the ideological extremists pushing politically correct ideology, a belief system that has created a change in the meaning of sanity. The current leftist reversion to paganism and pagan mythology teaches that the concept of morality is infinitely malleable and entirely subject to individual human will. That concept increasingly means that the left deems Christians, who believe in a universal moral or-

der, insane—Christians, who hold to a sober analysis of the human condition while also holding an elevated view of what it means to be a redeemed and restored human being. Christians, whose narrative of several thousand years has been the basis of Western civilization, are deemed mad. They are the outliers in a country that was and still largely is Christian.

Such inversion of truth is what happens when a society is pagan or reverts to paganism, as is clearly illustrated in the case of the Apostle Paul, who was deeply involved in pagan (politically correct and politically reinforced) politics similar to that of today.

Summoned to appear in court by the Roman rulers of his day, Paul testified concerning his conversion to Christianity before Festus, procurator of Judea, and King Herod Agrippa II, who was in an incestuous relationship with his sister Bernice.

Paul spoke before the two men about the core claims of billions of Christians throughout the ages: Christ has died; Christ has risen; Christ will come again. He presented the case for Christianity compellingly, clearly, and persuasively.

The response from the two leaders before whom Paul was being tried? Agrippa was not persuaded. Festus shouted, “You are out of your mind. Your great learning is driving you insane” (Acts 26).

Not much has changed since the time of Festus and Agrippa. The women of The View would doubtless wink at Agrippa’s incestuous relationship with his sister and would mock Paul for trying to persuade them of the foundational beliefs of Christianity.

Such is the cynicism and downright hatred on the part of the left that a person like Mike Pence, who believes in the Christian ideals of what is just, good, noble, and pure, is seen as an inherently hateful person clinging to rags of superstition.

Fortunately, Pence is speaking out against the virulent hatred of Christians promoted by Behar and others like her. He recently said: To have ABC have a broadcast that compares Christianity to mental illness is just wrong... I call them out on it, not because of what was said about me, but because it’s just simply wrong for ABC to have a television program that expresses that kind of intolerance.

The vice president went on to say he considers his sustaining faith essential to his walk, adding that he and his wife regularly start their mornings with prayer and Bible-reading. “I am not unusual,” he stated.

He is right about the intolerance as well as the fact he

is not unusual. Tens of millions of American Christians and hundreds of millions around the world consider the core beliefs of Christianity the bedrock of their existence.

But Behar, as well as her fellow atheistic leftists, would have all Christians categorized as insane because they pray to God and expect to hear something back from their creator, Father, and Redeemer.

The question remains: who’s crazy and hateful? Who is sane, and who is not; who is lying, and who is telling the truth?

Is the reprehensible person someone like Mike Pence, who behaves in a dignified and moral manner and who tolerantly invites those in opposition to his beliefs to dialogue with him? Or is it people like Behar, who are ignoramuses knowing virtually nothing of history and Christianity and who descend from the line of Festus and Agrippa?

In the long run, Festus and Agrippa were, and modern-day scoffers like Behar are, merely obscure historical footnotes. They will scarcely be remembered.

But Paul, the eloquent defender and expositor of Christianity, will prevail. So too will the Christ who founded the Church that will prevail even though the very Gates of Hell are against it.

—*American Thinker*, February 17, 2018

Higher Education

by Jack Kerwick

The University is in a time of crisis.

It isn’t just the fact that faculty members have abandoned their mission in favor of politicizing education that’s cause for concern. The astonishing audacity of students also renders painfully obvious that things have gotten entirely out of control on college campuses.

That this is so is made painfully obvious by the audaciousness of students at places like the College of Wooster in Ohio.

Recently, student activists issued to administrators a list of “demands.” “We, the students of the College of Wooster,” the list begins, “have a right, responsibility, and duty to hold our institution accountable for its failure to meet the needs of the student body.”

The first on the students’ list pertains to—surprise, surprise!—increased funding for the Center of Diversity and Inclusion. “Over the last four years, funding for the CDI has decreased drastically,” they lament. Yet “for the

college to truly ‘stand united against hate and contribute to a safe learning environment,’ the funding for this office must increase.”

Not only must the funding increase, students insist upon determining the uses to which the funding will be deployed: “Greater resources for their everyday office tasks;” “Mandatory Training for student leaders on campus;” and “Increased access to cultural engagement education and training for groups that request these services.”

Moving along, students demand that their organizations and activities receive funding comparable to that received by clubs that “do not engage with the wider campus community” on “issues of diversity.” Supposedly, “Brothers of Diversity,” the “African Student Union,” “ASIA,” and “First-Generation Student Org” didn’t receive as much monies as did “Men’s Ultimate Frisbee” and “Men’s Hockey.”

Since the college is guilty of “favoring” “non-essential diversity groups,” it fails to support minorities.

The students demand as well that all new students be required to enroll in a “cultural competency training course” that will begin during orientation week and continue throughout their whole first year. The Center of Diversity and Inclusion will determine the content of this training course, but it must be submitted to the student activists for review at least once a year.

Yet it’s not just other students who these bullies require to enroll in a cultural competency program; faculty members must as well. “All new, returning, and tenured faculty are required to attend a cultural competency training course. This will occur right before classes begin and continue on a semesterly basis.”

The activists add that the program will be designed conjointly by the Center of Diversity and Inclusion, faculty, staff, and, of course, the student demanders themselves. Annually, the program will go up for review, presumably, before the tribunal of the wisdom of the student activists.

The College of Wooster already provides free storage for all international students. Among the demands is that it now supply free storage for “long-distance and low-income students” as well. A committee, the students

say, will be created to “review applications.”

Other demands include, but are not limited to, the following:

The College must provide “an easily accessible list of resources” for students who witness “bigoted statements or actions,” whether perpetrated by fellow students or instructors.

Students insist that “a person of color” be hired “for both a Title IX Deputy and Director of Student Rights and Responsibility,” for a non-white person’s occupying this position is “essential to creating a diverse environment for college discussions of sexual violence, and providing survivors with an inclusive environment for the healing and reporting processes.”

Students demand that “SafeZone training” become a requirement “for new and returning students,” and they demand every group “representing people of color should have a provided space for their own private use for the purpose of better serving their targeted community.”

Also, the College website must “immediately” become “language-friendly in every possible language for the equal access among our diverse campus community and their families across the globe.”

The student activists are calling for the “immediate” expulsion of another student, someone by the name of Drake Schwenke, who they identify with a group called “the Wooster Right-Wingers.” And neither do these activists have any patience for their school’s insistence that before it expels its students, it must conduct an investigation in order to respect its “‘judicial process’” and “‘the rights of the accused.’” The student in question, the activists inform the school, “had already been identified as racist and anti-Semitic before his social media posts were made public” (Those making these demands, tellingly, fail to specify exactly how or by whom the student was determined to be “racist” and “anti-Semitic”).

It isn’t just the “immediate” expulsion of fellow students for which the student activists call; they demand as well that “multiple Faculty and Staff members”—who they identify by name—be made to account for their continual “anti-blackness, stereotyping of minority groups and simply hate speech.”

Founded in 1953, the Christian Anti-Communism Crusade, under the leadership of Dr. Fred C. Schwarz (1913-2009) has been publishing a monthly newsletter since 1960. *The Schwarz Report* is edited by Dr. David A. Noebel and Dr. Michael Bauman and is offered free of charge to anyone asking for it. The Crusade’s address is PO Box 129, Manitou Springs, CO 80829. Our telephone number is 719-685-9043. All correspondence and tax-deductible gifts (CACC is a 501C3 tax-exempt organization) may be sent to this address. You may also access earlier editions of *The Schwarz Report* and make donations at www.schwarzreport.org. Permission to reproduce materials from this Report is granted provided that the article and author are given along with our name and address. Our daily blog address is www.thunderontheright.wordpress.com.

The students elaborate: “We expect the college administration to hold faculty and staff to the same standards as students when it comes to racists [sic], sexist, bigoted, misinformed, and stereotypical comments.” Since faculty and staff “must be held accountable,” “students should be able to press judicial charges against faculty and staff who [that] violate our community standards.”

Evidently, these students are responsible for having taken control of a campus building shortly before this list of demands was drawn up. They conclude their lengthy list with a demand for “amnesty.” Specifically, they demand that “the College will not penalize, prosecute, or punish any student involved in the protest and the taking over of Galpin Hall on January 24, 2018.”

In fact, those students who are “currently on academic probation will not be unfairly targeted for missing a class,” those “who missed a project, quiz or test should be allowed to retake or make the assignment up,” and those “who missed work will not be dismissed or removed from their position.”

This list of “demands” would be laughable if it wasn’t such an outrage. If the administrators of the College of Wooster were concerned about doing their job, they would have summarily expelled every student who occupied a campus building. Yet it’s precisely because administrators at institutions around the country have long caved to the demands of thuggish students that these students, at Wooster, are emboldened as they are in making any demands.

The inmates are running the asylum. This is one thing (though not the only thing) that must change course immediately if higher education is to have any hope of returning to its former glorious self.

—*FrontPageMag.com*, February 2, 2018

FARC Exposed

by Monica Showalter

Here’s something we learn from Colombia: no one, and I mean no one, likes left-wing thugs, the creeps who prance around in Che t-shirts, get government bennies, and literally get away with murder.

That’s the result of an election held there over the weekend, where FARC Marxist narco-terrorists got next to nothing in the vaunted “peace process” elections, in the culmination of the oh, so globally vaunted peace

process that got Colombia’s appeasementist president, Juan Manuel Santos, the Nobel Peace Prize. Seeing FARC’s Marxist narco-terrorists on the ballot with ten free seats in Congress, the final word was that voters just wouldn’t vote for them.

That was the verdict from Sunday’s election in Colombia, with FARC taking home a grand total of...0.21% of the vote in the Colombian House and 0.34% of the vote in the Colombian Senate, rendering them a rounding error.

It was lower than even so-called Colombia experts had predicted (neighborhood of 5%) to the press, and far lower than what Northern Ireland’s detested Irish Republican Army terrorists took home from their own peace-with-impunity deal, brokered by Bill Clinton in the 1990s.

So for all the left’s romance about guerrillas out there, all the Che t-shirts, and all the left’s love for “peace processes” that reward terrorists, Colombians had other ideas.

Seriously, they really rejected these left-wing thugs. And it’s not as if these voters hadn’t tried to tell their government this earlier.

In a 2016 referendum, Colombians told their government they weren’t on with the Cuba-brokered deal to fork over ten free congressional seats to FARC, the brutal leftist terrorists who terrorized the country in the name of communism for half a century, killing 221,000 people. Colombia’s government, along with Juan Manuel Santos, blithely ignored the surprise results of that referendum on the FARC “peace deal,” and went ahead and shoved the bad peace deal right in the voters’ faces anyway, expecting some of them to go vote for FARC and pretend the war and terror FARC caused never happened.

Since I spent some time in Colombia, I can tell you a few things about what it was like before FARC was called to the “peace process.”

Colombia, until President Alvaro Uribe was elected in 2001, taking office the next year, really was a hell-hole. I remember my first glimpse of the country when I landed there on a stopover in 2000, looking at how sad and morose the capital city looked from the plane—and because of security concerns, not even being allowed off that plane for the duration of the stopover. When I got to my destination in Ecuador, all I heard about Colombia was that it was a constant source of problems to its smaller neighbor, which wanted nothing to do with it and considered it a plague. In 1998, it really was such a hellhole; its capital was surrounded by FARC terrorists

who were openly (and not sneaking around in the jungle) poised to seize the city from its surrounding hillsides with advanced weapons of war. A Colombian friend took me up to those hillsides in 2007, when I visited again, to show me how on the ropes the country was by these communist narco-terrorists, bred from Colombia's left-wing universities. It was so sad that such a beautiful country could be laid so low by such human garbage inspired by Fidel Castro.

Worse still, every Colombian family would have “the conversation,” Colombian friends explained to me. They would make a pact to never bankrupt the family with ransom if one of them were kidnapped, it was all pre-agreed. And around the windows of townhouses and apartments in northern Bogotá, around the beautiful Spanish-style plazas, I would see paper signs in windows from people pleading for prayers and help to rescue their kidnapped relatives. This was as late as 2007. Meanwhile, the newspapers were roaring with praise for the military in the letters to the editor section, one after another praising the troops. And high up on the hills, in an area known as Monserrate, overlooking the capital, at a beautiful church there, the interior had a sign asking parishioners not to write their petitions on the church walls. The walls were absolutely covered with penciled in pleas for prayers for relatives murdered by the FARC terrorists and relatives kidnapped. Nobody obeyed the sign.

That should give a whiff of how intense this ordeal has been. And if you don't get to Colombia, be sure to read the memoirs of three American hostages of FARC, *Out of Captivity*, which were memorably brilliant in describing just how depraved these Marxist narco-terrorists really were.

What we have here is the hard, hard reality. Left-wing terrorists are criminals, not misunderstood political actors. They belong in jail if not ignominiously defeated and dead on the battlefield. Peace processes for these people are baloney. It's no coincidence that hard-core right-wing parties (led by former President Uribe) were, just by coincidence, the big winners in this election. Far from lapping up votes, FARC got a stinging rebuke that must have surprised even them. Because voters just don't like communism or guerrillas with long records of atrocities. Let's hope FARC eventually get what's really coming to them, given their record. And the left that has idolized them and the peace process goes down with them.

—*American Thinker*, March 13, 2018

Battle for the Children

by Emily Belz

Robin Prather, a retired children's librarian in Oregon and a Christian, volunteers at a school library in the district where she used to work. A fellow librarian pointed out a title to her in an upcoming popular reading competition for third- through fifth-graders: *George* by Alex Gino.

The story centers on a boy who is convinced he is a girl, and discusses genitalia, taking hormones, sexual orientation, and sex change surgeries. “We are talking about 8- to 11-year-old elementary students,” Prather wrote in an email. “Some of these children don't even know about the facts of life yet.”

The competition is called Battle of the Books, a reading event that grew out of a Chicago radio show in the 1940s and is in school districts and libraries all over the country now. Once a year school teams meet to battle in a game show format, answering trivia questions about books on the Battle of the Books list.

George is on Oregon's recently released Battle of the Books list for the 2018-2019 school year.

In one part of the book, *George* recounts watching a television interview with a transgender woman where they discussed sex change surgery. “So George knew it could be done,” the book says. “A boy could become a girl. She [George] had since read on the Internet that you could take girl hormones that would change your body, and you could get a bunch of different surgeries if you wanted them and had the money. This was called transitioning. You could even start before you were eighteen with pills called androgen blockers that stopped the boy hormones already inside you from turning your body into a man's.”

The book is not just “raising awareness” for gender dysphoria or endorsing transgenderism for children—it is publishing risky health data. Pediatric hormone blocking is a relatively new practice (first undertaken in the United States in 2007), and the FDA hasn't approved it. Giving cross-sex hormones like estrogen to a boy is also not FDA-approved.

A recent journal publication from a Washington University pediatric endocrinologist and two Johns Hopkins Medical School psychiatrists called hormone therapy in children “a drastic and experimental measure.” They argued that doctors often promise that the effects of hormone blockers are fully reversible when there is little scientific evidence to confirm that. (Doctors across the spectrum

agree that the vast majority of children diagnosed with gender dysphoria later identify with their biological sex.)

But books like *George* are gaining more acceptance, and publishers are putting out more of them. “The next frontier for authors writing about transgender people seems to be middle-grade literature, or books aimed at 8- to 12-year-olds,” asserted *The New York Times* in a 2015 piece.

A children’s book editor at Scholastic, and the editor of *George*, David Levithan, told *Publisher’s Weekly* that he had been seeing more transgender titles cross his desk and added, “Hopefully more trans writers will write them.” Levithan, himself a YA author, featured in his first book in 2003 “a homecoming queen who used to be a guy.” Scholastic didn’t return requests for comment.

As publishers publish, critics give accolades, which lead to awards—the award might be from an LGBT group, but it allows the book to be called “award-winning,” a description I heard several times in defense of *George*. In 2016, the American Library Association (ALA) presented *Gino* with the Children’s Stonewall Award, the first of that award ever given specifically for children’s literature. (There’s been an ALA award for LGBT young adult & children’s literature since 2010.)

Awards help titles onto reading lists like Battle of the Books. These elementary-aged titles on transgenderism or gender fluidity are still few and far between—several children’s librarians at public libraries I spoke with had never encountered books on this topic. But the numbers are slowly growing and gaining gatekeeper endorsements.

The ALA awards and review accolades put librarians on the ground in a bind. Pamela Palmer is a recently retired children’s librarian in southwest Virginia, where she served at the county library for 23 years. She was in charge of acquisitions for the children’s section and had about \$500 a month to spend on new titles. She would order books requested by patrons and then select the rest herself.

To decide on new titles, she would read *School Library Journal*, the most complete catalogue of children’s book reviews. When *George* was published in 2015, she saw that *SLJ* gave it a starred review. *SLJ* called the book “a required purchase for any collection that serves a middle grade population.”

“Drat,” Palmer thought. An *SLJ* starred review means most larger library systems would stock the book. The *SLJ* reviewer, Ingrid Abrams, wrote in the review: “While children can have a sense of their gender identity as early

as the age of three, children’s literature is shockingly bereft of trans protagonists, especially where middle grade literature is concerned.” Abrams was also at the time the director-at-large for the ALA’s Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Round Table.

Shortly after the book was published, Palmer said her boss emailed and asked her to order *George*. Her boss, Josephine Clark, doesn’t remember asking her to buy it and doesn’t have an email record of the request to Palmer. Clark said she would regularly send reviews of notable new books, of which *George* was one, to the children’s librarians for possible acquisition.

Palmer said her boss asked “nicely, not realizing what a big deal it was to me.” Clark said she made no demand to buy the book, and when I asked her about it, she had to check the library’s shelves to see whether they had the book. Whatever the case, Palmer acquired the book despite her reservations.

ALA awards and *SLJ* starred reviews are one thing. But volunteer librarians and teachers are often the ones selecting titles for Battle of the Books, state “master lists,” and state awards. Which brings us back to the question: How did *George* end up on the Battle of the Books list in Oregon?

A national Battle of the Books organization comes up with one list, but it hasn’t released its titles for 2018-2019 yet, and every BOB chapter I talked to around the country comes up with its own list, rather than using the national list. Some BOB chapters are just one library, some cover several school districts, and some like Oregon are statewide.

Oregon draws on a statewide group of librarians to volunteer to curate the state’s list. First, the group accepts reader nominations for the list, and *George* was one of the nominees. Then the OBOB selection committee considers whether nominated titles meet the organization’s criteria to be on the list. The criteria include whether the book (1) “is an appropriate reading level for 3-5th grade;” (2) “adds diversity of character, plot, perspective, and genre” to the OBOB list; and (3) “is an award winning book that has high-quality writing and is well-reviewed.” The committee decided *George* met the criteria.

“There was not sufficient feedback to cause concern for the committee to exclude the book from the list,” OBOB’s selection chair Courtney Snyder wrote me about *George*. Snyder told me that according to the handbook, once a title is on the list, it cannot be removed. After I asked about the inclusion of *George*, OBOB added a

statement about the choice on its website, repeating most of what Snyder wrote me.

Now even Oregon public school districts are debating what to do with the list for next year, as students will likely start reading the titles on next year's list over the summer. Roseburg Public Schools' director of human resources Robert Freeman said the district was still discussing how it was going to inform parents about *George's* inclusion on the BOB list, but initially the staff has talked about emphasizing to parents that the program is voluntary and that students who do decide to participate don't have to read all the titles. He also underscored that "school districts have no say in these selections."

Sheila Shapiro, a longtime public librarian and a Christian who works in the Portland, Ore., area, said her library buys copies of everything on the OBOB list so they're available to check out; they'll load up the shelves with next year's list by the summer so kids can read over break.

Shapiro noticed these kinds of children's books are becoming more of a "norm," but she added that "the community has not been, as far as I know, clamoring for books on these topics." She has read books on transgenderism for older age groups and said it has helped her understand some struggles that people with gender dysphoria go through. "You have compassion for them," Shapiro said. "But for a young child... I would want a parent right there." She said she can't refuse the book to patrons but wouldn't have her own child read it.

Some bookworm kids live for Battle of the Books—I was one of those in middle school and high school, reading through every book on the list sometimes multiple times over. It allowed me to discover diverse books I never would have read on my own. Carly Brust is a mother of six in Wheaton, Ill., and her oldest daughter Calla, 10, is in her first year of Battle of the Books at Wheaton Christian, a local private school. Calla loves it. She doesn't play sports, according to her mom—she reads books. Battle of the Books is her World Series.

Wheaton Public Library puts together the book list for Wheaton Christian and the 10 surrounding public schools and manages the battles. The schools do eight rounds of battles to determine a champion. Wheaton Christian's team was in second place of the 12 schools contending, heading into the final round. The library posts the points each team receives, and Calla would go to the library daily to check the points. Her team meets four times a week.

"She is not messing around," said Brust.

George isn't on the list in Calla's district, but Whea-

ton Christian's librarian combs through the list to find any titles that might be of concern to Christian parents, and Brust largely leans on the librarian's judgment. The librarian emailed parents this year to alert them to one title, *Ghosts* by Raina Telgemeier, that may not fit the "Christian worldview."

The school emphasized to parents that the students did not have to read the book and suggested that parents read it first if their children were going to read it. Brust read *Ghosts* and then let her daughter read it. One other student read it too, so they are the designated hitters for *Ghosts* questions.

But with a book like *George*, Brust can see that approach falling short: "I wonder if that will scare people away from even having their kid on the team at all, from an exposure sense." Her daughter hasn't had sex education yet, so many of the graphic details in *George* would be new to her. For now Brust doesn't see a book with that kind of controversial material making it onto a list in their conservative, largely Christian district.

Those books are going on other lists in Illinois, though. *Lily and Dunkin* by Donna Gephart won the state's Rebecca Caudill Young Readers' Book Award. In *Lily and Dunkin*, which the list says is for sixth to eighth grade, Tim is an eighth-grade boy who is certain he is a girl (Lily). It also talks about hormone blockers, sex change surgery, and taking estrogen. Tim narrates: "I need to start hormone blockers right now or things are going to happen that can't be reversed." One librarian told me the public school district in Lincolnshire, Ill., determines its Battle of the Books list from the Caudill awards list, so *Lily and Dunkin* will likely be on next year's Battle of the Books list.

George won a similar state award in Kansas. Emporia State University hosts a committee of parents, teachers, and librarians who choose the master list for the William Allen White Children's Book Award every year, which becomes a basis for many school library acquisitions. Last year they awarded *George*, putting it on the master list for third- to fifth-graders.

Despite the award and inclusion on the master list, Wichita public schools decided not to put *George* on its master list for elementary school shelves, with the supervising librarian Gail Becker telling *The Wichita Eagle* that the book was not age-appropriate. Becker pointed to the passages about porn, male genitalia, and sex change surgery, and said she didn't think the "average 8-year-old" would be ready for those topics.

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