



DOWNERS GROVE PUBLIC LIBRARY

1050 Curtiss Street
Downers Grove, IL 60515
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December 20, 2021

A message from the Board of Library Trustees and Director Julie Milavec:

To the Downers Grove community:

The library fully condemns all discrimination, harassment, and violence against members of the LGBTQ+ community. We fully support them to live their lives openly and authentically. Too often, issues facing the LGBTQ+ community go unacknowledged. Recently, in Downers Grove, attacks against this community have been exhibited through censorship, harmful language, and doxxing (publishing identifying information about an individual or organization with the intent of harm and harassment). The library stands firmly in its mission to be a place for everyone to discover, grow, play, learn.

In November, Downers Grove was featured across [numerous media outlets](#) in response to our community high schools' (District 99) board meeting and the challenged book, *Gender Queer* by Maia Kobabe. As the articles note, the challenge was raised not by students but by parents. Attempts at censorship by parents of books with LGBTQ+ themes or characters have been going on for years as documented by the [American Library Association](#). Students of District 99, like Josiah Poynter, have voiced their opinions clearly: "I think this book is a prime example of education. We need to realize that there are people who are different than straight people, and they have experiences just like everybody else." The freedom to seek and access information is a cornerstone [of libraries](#). DGPL supports the inclusion of books that offer mirrors of one's own story, and windows to view the experiences of others, in order to develop acceptance, compassion, and empathy.

This December, the Trans Santa community event sparked a backlash of hate and harassment. The treatment of LGBTQ+ leaders in Downers Grove in response to the event is most concerning and unacceptable. Publications and social media posts doxxing the hosts of the event are illegal and dangerous acts of cyberbullying. Furthermore, instances of deadnaming, using a name for someone that they have intentionally and specifically separated themselves from, is appalling, disrespectful, and damaging. These violations of privacy and safety are not characteristics the library condones or wishes to see in the Downers Grove community.

Discussion surrounding these incidents has included hateful language that perpetuates false and destructive narratives about the LGBTQ+ community. The labeling of LGBTQ+ community members as pedophiles, rapists, child-molesters, the devil, evil, and other vicious terms continues to dehumanize, stigmatize, and oppress. These narratives also help to maintain false notions that LGBTQ+ individuals pose a threat to children and others. These beliefs are based on bigotry and not on the personal character of individuals within the LGBTQ+ community. The library denounces individuals and groups such as the [Proud Boys](#) whose words and actions incite violence and hate against this community. Due to these hateful ideologies, 2021 has become the [worst year](#) in recent history for anti-LGBTQ+ legislation; hundreds of anti-LGBTQ+ bills were introduced into state legislature, and dozens were [signed into law](#). This current trend in state legislature reinforces longstanding inequities in the civil rights of the LGBTQ+ community.

The hate, discrimination, harassment, and violence toward the LGBTQ+ community has resulted in, and continues to cause, widespread negative effects.

Members of this community experience [higher rates](#) of suicide, homelessness, substance abuse, and inadequate access to healthcare. The library reaffirms its commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion work with the goal of creating a more inclusive and equitable space for the entire Downers Grove community. To our LGBTQ+ staff and community members: we stand with you, celebrate you, recognize your struggles, and appreciate the diversity of your community. We invite everyone to join us in our support and in our efforts to create a more welcoming Downers Grove.

DGPL invites you to explore resources for supporting members of the LGBTQ+ community, their experiences, and issues they face:

Resources

- [Freedom for All Americans](#)
- [GLAAD](#)
- [Hollaback!](#)
- [Human Rights Campaign](#)
- [NAMI](#)
- [Outwards Journey](#)
- [Pronouns Matter: Beyond He and She](#)
- [The Trevor Project](#)
- [Youth Outlook](#)

Booklists

- [Adults](#)
- [Adults - Films and Documentaries](#)
- [Adults - Nonfiction/Parenting](#)
- [Teens](#)
- [Older Kids \(Grade School\)](#)
- [Younger Kids \(Picture Books\)](#)