

Queens Library



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Queens Library at Bellerose
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August 28, 2016

Aaron Nikko
239-05 82nd Avenue
Bellerose, NY 11426

Mr. Nikko,

I am writing to you to today to address your concerns regarding our inclusion of the book *Between the World and Me* by Ta-Nehisi Coates in our young adult collection. I understand that you find this literary work to be objectionable based on your observation that it contains violence, profanity and controversial race issues. You feel that there are questionable morals in the author's words of injustice. I understand your concern, even though I disagree.

The book is a memoir, and frankly, I find it admirable the way he was able to create lines so eloquently out of so much obvious pain and fear. The work has been awarded the 2016 Pulitzer Prize for General Non-Fiction, the 2015 National Book Award for Nonfiction, and the 2016 NAACP Image Award for Outstanding Literary Work in Biography / Auto-biography.

The author examines in great detail, through his own life experiences, his views of systematic racism and subjugation. I can see how many readers may find it questionable. However, this artistic work is groundbreaking and, speaking from my own personal opinion, extremely thought provoking. I can't imagine a more thorough narrative where the reader is actually able to walk in the character's shoes.

The author successfully presents his points using his own observations and historical facts. He carefully weaves in his family dynamic in the storytelling. It is incredibly personal, as the story of his journey unfolds as a letter written to his son.

Despite my feeling about the book, even if I didn't love it, it does fall upon me and all of us here in the Queens library system, to take a proactive stand to not only prevent any censorship of what some may consider inappropriate materials, but to make sure we provide a broad range of diverse and provocative materials for educational and pleasure reading. Materials will not be banned,

deemed unacceptable or removed for any reason. We will not pull anything based on political, religious, or moral grounds, or for fear of controversy.

It is the duty and responsibility of libraries to provide an uncensored and unbiased collection of materials (including books, DVDs, music, E-resources, etc) for research, interest and/or entertainment to the community in which we serve. Our materials will not be suppressed based on what some may consider objectionable content. We are dedicated to providing free and open access to any and all forms of literary and artistic expression.

For a detailed description of our policies governing collection development, please visit <http://www.queenslibrary.org/about-us/collection-development>. From there, you will also find hyperlinks for further examination of the values I have stated above. Most specifically, and relevant to your concerns, is the mission statement of the Queens library and the Library Bill of Rights.

I hope that this letter explains our stand on making sure our patrons are always free to read, unhindered, and that it is my personal responsibility to protect that right. We all work diligently to ensure everyone's ability to do so. We are careful to make sure that our variety of works service all of our patrons by making sure we continuously update our collection to include diverse literature and media.

Please feel free to come see me next time you visit our branch. I'd be more than happy to discuss this with you. And I'd be glad to assist you in finding reading materials that are more suited to your personal preferences.

Sincerely,
Gloria L. Munsch-Clark
Queens Library liaison