

FREE THE BOOKS

Welcome to **Free the Books**, a worksheet to get you started in your print activism regarding the widespread and increased banning of books in the US. This worksheet will be ever-evolving as more ideas and information come to light. I am always open to feedback and suggestions!

Images of Nazis burning books left an indelible mark on me as a child and informed my understanding of what a free society inherently is— it doesn't ban and/or burn books. **A free society welcomes and debates multiple points of view and accepts their right to exist.** Together we can work to insure access to books for people of all ages and walks of life.

Time to get inky! -Jen @ [Starshaped Press](#)

READ UP!

Here are some sources for information regarding banned books and how to support libraries.



[ala.org](#) is the American Library Association. They support libraries/librarians with a mission to “enhance learning and ensure access to information for all.”

[uniteagainstbookbans.org](#)

[pen.org](#) supports a vast array of programming centered on the ideas of freely sharing words, ideas and actions for all people.

[booksanctuary.org](#) is organized by the Chicago Public Library but is not limited to Chicago.

[ilovelibraries.org](#) is a love letter to libraries and has regular updates on book bans.

ACTION!

Time to harness the power of print.



Check out the next page for a list of actions to consider.

These range from using your press power to draw attention to the issues (don't be afraid to be specific!), raise funds to help fight censorship through legal means or increase engagement with your community to gather support for the voices that are being silenced.

SHARE!

If you've taken action and have a campaign to share, reach out!



Share your work! Please let me know if you've successfully launched a campaign, printed posters, created a community action, etc. so it can be shared via the [Free the Books](#) email list as well as social media.

jenrocks@starshaped.com

[@starshapedpress](#) (instagram)

FREE THE BOOKS } ACTIONS

There are so many ways to harness the power of the press to inspire action. Below is a list of ways to use your printing abilities to call others to the cause of combating censorship. Consider printing with ***actions*** attached: to raise awareness for local/national events around book bans, to sell & generate funds for various organizations fighting bans or to be in direct contact with those who influence library budgets and acquisitions.

- ☛ **Print** stacks of postcards that you and others can use to send to community leaders, local government and congressional representatives! Elected leaders are supposed to listen to their constituents so you want to be the squeakiest wheel. You can add language as well as imagery so all folks have to do is fill in the addresses and stamp them if they feel anxious about what to write.
- ☛ **Create** posters or broadsides that advertise local school board meetings. These meetings are where some of the loudest book banning voices are showing up. Let people know when they're happening and that they can add their voice to the arguments.
- ☛ **Look** for either local or national literacy programs that collect books and money for populations that might not have ready access to them. One of our favorites is [Reach out and Read](#). Sell prints to either donate money or books to help them out. Also consider prison literacy programs/book clubs. Everyone should have the right to read freely.
- ☛ **Build** your own [Little Free Library!](#) These tiny, free-standing book nooks are all over and you can stack them with books that many might not have access to (see the regularly banned books list for ideas).
- ☛ **Go** right to the source— ask your local librarians how they can best be supported! They may know exactly when board meetings happen, what books are threatened and what services libraries offer that go unnoticed and unsupported but are vital to the community they serve.
- ☛ **Invite** visitors to your print shop for a community printing session about book bans. Discuss talking points from the listed sites on this worksheet and further actions.
- ☛ **Donate.** [Donorschoose.org](#) lets you look for schools that most need resources and books that libraries often supply but may be limited due to budgetary constraints or the absence of a school library.
- ☛ **Do you run a community print center?** Can you organize a local event for printers/non-printers to add their voices to the issue through a shared experience? Consider if you're able to print publicly, offer your services to local libraries or create a new event where people can learn more about the rise of book bans and the impingement on free speech.
- ☛ **Do you teach a letterpress class?** Can you engage students to take up the cause of bans as both a research and print project, where they will both understand a pressing issue while addressing it visually to create a poster?
- ☛ **If you work in fine press printing/book arts,** consider if libraries weren't there to collect your art. Can you use your talents to support ALL libraries and not just special collections?

FREE THE BOOKS } CREATIVE PROMPTS

Need help generating ideas for your prints? Here's a list of creative prompts to get those thoughts and sketches flowing and onto paper!

- What do you love about books? What is their purpose?
- What was your first experience in a library? The most recent?
- What is your favorite book and why? Favorite author and why?
- What imagery do books conjure for you?
- What is the function of a library in both public and/or private spaces?
- How did a book change you?
- How do you feel about censorship? Does the idea of it affect how you design/print?
- Have you engaged with a different generation (younger or older) over reading and sharing books together?
- What does the world look like without libraries or books?
- What do book bans look like? How does the image of burning books affect you?
- What does the First Amendment mean to you?
- How would you explain your passion for print/reading to someone else?
- What group of people do you want to reach? What imagery and words affect that group the most?
- Books most likely to be banned reflect stories of communities traditionally denied a voice in public spheres. Are you a part of one of these communities and if so, how does the stifling of your voice affect you and your work?
- Visit the list of [banned books](#). Have you read any of these? What if you didn't have the ability to do so or were told you couldn't have access to them?