

There should be no censorship of books – says the government’s censor of books



by Lev Tsitrin

Hypocrisy is, to think of it, the main means of an individual’s survival within a group. “If you can’t beat them, join them” is a much-heeded maxim. This is how all dictatorships operate; not a few of those who shouted, at the top of their lungs, “*heil Hitler!*” or “*long live Comrade Stalin!*” actually hated the person whom they hailed – but what is one to do when people all around them froth at their mouths proclaiming their undying allegiance to the leader? Standing out is dangerous. Honesty meant death; hypocrisy meant life – not a difficult choice to make. This is why Exodus 23 – “You shall not follow a crowd to do evil; nor shall you testify in a dispute so as to turn aside after many to pervert justice” – is a near-impossible commandment to follow. People who did – people like Sakharov and Solzhenitsyn, are rare creatures indeed. Navalny’s fate further proves the point.

We see this replicated in today's Iran, China, North Korea, and Russia. Yet even in the Western, "free" world hypocrisy thrives. In part, this is because we are but an amalgamation of small dictatorships bunched together – every company, every classroom is one. Insist on doing things your way rather than the manager's, and you'll quickly discover the price of honesty; don't bend down to peer pressure, and you'll find yourself ostracized and shunned.

These reflections were triggered by the glaring instance of hypocrisy I just saw in a *New York Times*' report, "[Attempts to Ban Books Accelerated Last Year](#)" which, in a nutshell, describes the power struggle over who decides what kind of reading material belongs in a public library – the librarians, or the public? It paints the librarians as some anti-censorship, free speech force – but they are anything but, given that it is the Library of Congress that nips in the bud the majority of books (i.e. those published by their authors), by denying them the subject matter keywords that make books visible in the "marketplace of ideas." Only corporations need apply.

So it pains me to point to *New York Times*' Alexandra Alter and the people she quotes in her report – the American Library Association's president Emily Drabinski, and Deborah Caldwell-Stone, the director of its Office for Intellectual Freedom that they are nothing but out-and-out hypocrites. (I used the word "pains" to prove the universality of hypocrisy – I chose it not because I meant it, but because I didn't want to come across as being rude to the ladies.)

What's in it for them? I guess, corporate support for their organization. The Library of Congress' policy is a clear-cut instance of crony capitalism, of the government's wish to hand over the "marketplace of ideas" to corporations, so that library budgets, and moneys spent at bookstores go to corporate publishers, and not get dribbled away, going to individual authors. As to "free speech" – who cares? It is

perhaps better if people can't speak out of their own mouths, but a corporate editor-censor first approves the contents of speech offered to the public. Corporations must have the monopoly – and damn the free speech!

So says the Library of Congress – yet if you listen to Mses. Alter, Drabinski, Caldwell-Stone, the librarians are the last line of defense in the battle for free speech!

This is baffling – but this is what hypocrisy is supposed to be all about, after all – blowing hot and cold at the same time, speaking out of both corners of one's mouth, all in order to confuse.

A major tool of survival, hypocrisy is deeply ingrained in human nature – but so is the urge to expose hypocrisy to public view. No matter how lofty-sounding is the platform from which hypocrisy is being broadcasted – the “American Library Association,” the “Office for Intellectual Freedom,” the *New York Times*, hypocrisy is still hypocrisy; a lie is still a lie. Librarians are no defenders of free speech – and the librarians of the Library of Congress are in fact its determined and entrenched enemies. Whoever tells you otherwise is a hypocrite, pure and simple.

Lev Tsitrin describes his unsuccessful attempt to overturn the Library of Congress' illegal and hypocritical policy in [“Why Do Judges Act as Lawyers?: A Guide to What's Wrong with American Law”](#)