



American Civil Liberties Union of Washington and
American Civil Liberties Union of Washington Foundation
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Carol
Full

February 28, 1989

Dear Friends:

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Thank you for agreeing to participate in the read-out of The Satanic Verses on this Friday, March 3, at the Fifth Avenue side of the Seattle Public Library. Please be sure to arrive by 11:50 a.m. so we can get organized.

Enclosed is the press notice and a selection from the book for you to read. We expect the entire event to take place within the noon hour. The schedule is as follows:

1. Welcome - Barb Dority - Washington Coalition Against Censorship.
2. Master of Ceremonies - Walter Carr, Elliott Bay Book Company - "Why We Are Here."
3. Readings: Tom Robbins (author of Even Cowgirls Get the Blues, Jitterbug Perfume, etc.)

Carol Doig, reading a statement for Ivan Doig (author of This House of Sky, Dancing at the Rascal Fair, etc.)

John Gilbert (actor, former bookstore owner).

Andrew Ward (commentator for National Public Radio's "All Things Considered").

4. Conclusion - Kathleen Taylor, ACLU.

See you Friday!

Sincerely,

Kathleen (pf)

Kathleen Taylor
Executive Director

02/28/89

KT:no
enclosures

24 Feb. '89

Dear Kathleen--

Here's the statement Carl will read for me on March 3. Of course feel free to edit out the phrase "here today at this gathering" if you have some use for the statement not specifically timely to the day.

Those who would ban this book, whether by blackmailing its author with threats to his life or by turning their abuse against publishers and booksellers, would have us believe that the words between the covers of Salman Rushdie's novel are what is at issue. But the issue is entirely one word: free. To keep tyranny from infecting it, a society must declare that its people are free to read a book such as this, or free not to read it--but above all, free to have that choice. As Salman Rushdie's words go free here today at this gathering, so does the message that freedom is stronger than those who try to bully it.

best wishes

14 March '89

Dear Mindy--

Am mailing this hurriedly, as Carol and I are about to go out of town for the next ten days. I hope the enclosed letter will help-- all good luck at the hearing, God bless, and do let me know how this episode comes out, okay?

best,

March 13, 1989

To the Montana House of Representatives Judiciary Committee

My friends:

I have read with care and a certain chill in my heart Senate Bills 307 and 342.

The history of mischief and worse that has been caused by censorship attempts such as these bills is too long to recite here; I trust that your committee is fully aware of the American Library Association's continuous and alarming compilation of book-bannings and other incursions on the freedom to read. Let me simply point out, as a person in the book business--for that is what a writer is--and as a native Montanan who has spent most of his adult life trying to write lovingly and insightfully about my home state, two of the crippling consequences of legislation such as this.

First, it puts an intolerable burden on booksellers. Theirs is already one of the most difficult of small businesses, and to lay them open to prosecution, by way of what never have been and never will be precisely definable terms such as "community standards" and "obscenity" and "literary significance," is as unfair as prosecuting grocery stores because the boxes of matches they sell could conceivably be used for arson. In Montana's current economic climate, it would be particularly unfortunate to impose legislation that may cause valuable community enterprises--bookstores and newsstands--to abandon or be driven out of business.

Second, bills such as these are loose cannon on the deck; they are loaded with unintended consequences waiting to happen. It is stunning to me that books I have written about Montana may end up banned in my home state, but that is clearly possible under bills such as these. In nearly all my books there are sexual incidents--as there have been in the story of humanity ever since the biblical Song of Solomon, and indeed as there are in the majority of modern literature. Someone, somewhere, is always going to be offended by efforts to portray the sexual side of life, necessary as it is to our understanding of these mysterious beings that are ourselves, and these bills in the hands of such zealots are deadly weapons against writers, booksellers, and

ultimately against readers and a free society. I beg you not to be taken in by the argument, however well-intentioned, that Montana's young people need to have their eyes shielded from the sins of the world; I must tell you frankly that in my own growing up in Montana I read works such as those singled out by this legislation--for I read everything I could put my eyes on--and if those books and magazines had any effect on me, it was to help make me the author of This House of Sky.

As a son of Montana, as a friend of its people, I urge you not to pass these so-called "cures" that are worse than the ailment.

respectfully yours,

Ivan Doig