

RIGHT TO
REMAIN SILENT

S-T-F-U, merci!
-M. Balcaen

"Hey, why haven't I been in the 'Right to Remain Silent' page? I say stupid things all the time."
-Ms. Brinkmeyer

"That TV is the streetlamp and I am the two-foot gnome."
-Mr. Miller

"If someone ever says that you have to be chemically castrated to join their cult, leave!"
-Mr. Burkle

"If someone says, 'Jump off a bridge,' I jump off a bridge. If someone says, 'Do drugs,' I... well, I don't do drugs."
-Dr. Schnoebelen

"Oh no, 'poop the bed' is something I came up with!"
-Dr. Thompson

To Have a Choice

By Nina Lavezzo-Stecopoulos

There are things that are simply facts. One fact is that it's better to have a choice, rather than having none. Recently, the Trump administration tried to stop an undocumented woman who was held in custody from getting an abortion, which is hideous. My opinion on abortion is that everyone should have a choice. Some people believe that abortions are wrong, and that's completely fine. But they should not force their opinion onto other people by taking away a choice from them. Sometimes, for some people, abortion is the only option.

Abortion recently came up in a conversation I happened to be having. About half of those involved didn't believe in Planned Parenthood but agreed that abortion should be an option. One girl, Alea*, didn't believe in abortion at all. Alea* said she would never, never get an abortion—even if she were raped. This woman didn't think that anyone should have an abortion, so I can assume she would like them to be illegal.

I believe that Alea* was incredibly uneducated and needed to learn more about abortion. First off, there are many different types of abortion. One can simply swallow a pill, which will then trigger a miscarriage that will feel natural to the body. This is not an option for long, but if a person has been raped and wants to take immediate action to abort the pregnancy, a pill is all it takes. The fact that there are women in the United States and all around the world not getting an abortion because they don't understand what it is and what their options are is itself horrifying.

I do believe that everyone is entitled to their opinion, but I want women to realize that abortion is not a bad thing. If a woman is not at a point in her life where she wants to have a child or simply go through with a pregnancy, it should be accepted in our society that she wants to have an abortion. And she deserves to have that option. There were over 100 million babies born already in 2017 according to the world clock. This information should show that there is no shortage of babies in the world and a single person's decision not to have one is not a crime in the slightest.

There are so many children that have already been born and just need a home. It makes me sad that women have children solely because they've gotten pregnant accidentally, feel pressured by society not to, or just feel like they have to go through with it because their family, friends, or significant other wants them to. If I were ever going to have children I already know I would adopt. I don't feel the need to bring another person into a universe that already has so many people in it.

So sure, people can have a baby when they're still in high school or college and maybe that will turn out great for them, but everyone should know that they can get an abortion. They can make a choice not to "kill" their unborn child but to wait for the right time or not have a child at all. Everyone should have that choice. There is nothing wrong with another option.

Rewinding Progress: Why We Can't Censor History

By Reese Hill

We're going backwards. Harper Lee's famous novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*, one of America's most culturally significant works of literature, was recently banned from an 8th grade curriculum in a school district in Biloxi, Mississippi. Why? "There is some language in the book that makes people uncomfortable," Kenny Holloway, the school board vice president, told the Sun Herald.

Makes them uncomfortable? This book is about racism. It's meant to hurt. It won the Pulitzer Prize in 1961 for how bluntly it addresses the lasting social issues of our past. It has sold over thirty million copies worldwide and has been translated into over 40 different languages, was voted the "greatest book of all time", and is taught nationwide for its narration on racism, sexual assault, and the Depression-era South. The book is significantly full of certain violent and derogatory language on purpose—to tell the true story of our country.

Considering the recent events of our nation, like the police brutality that has inspired highly controversial protests and the white supremacy marches in Virginia, it seems *To Kill a Mockingbird* should, now more than ever, be a book we turn to for national reflection and lessons in empathy. Instead, it is banned because sustaining 8th graders' comfort levels is apparently more important than teaching them how to

dismantle systemic oppression.

I would like to remind the public that just a matter of months ago, Southerners viciously protested the removal of statues and monuments honoring confederate generals. These statues represented slavery, segregation, and the deeply rooted racism that still infests our country, yet people would rather keep these figures around than the book analyzing the effects of the ideologies and influence of those men. It infuriates and also saddens me that there are still people in this world who would rather plug their ears, point fingers, and live in ignorance than confront our society's heavy faults dead on.

This is hardly the first time *To Kill a Mockingbird* has been banned from school curricula. Since its publishing in 1960, it has faced backlash from those who deem the language too adult, obscene, or lately, "uncomfortable." In 1966, Harper Lee responded via brief letter to the Hanover County School Board in Virginia, where in a similar situation, her novel was unanimously voted to be banned. She included \$10 to be used to send the school board back to grade school and remarked, "What I've heard makes me wonder if any of its members can read."

Lee purposefully wrote the novel to be distressing. Real life is incredibly distressing, and if we don't address the harsh topics as they are, we remain

idle on our path for change. But like the school in Biloxi, those threatened by the idea of taking ownership for the faults of their ancestors constantly find excuses to avoid confrontation—for example, Confederate statues are important because they represent heritage, neo-Nazis marching on college campuses have a right to express their opinion like other groups, and kneeling to protest police brutality against blacks can't be allowed because it disrespects veterans.

This has to stop. We must take responsibility for our history, own up to it, and grow from it. We can't have come this far to digress. No more shying away from controversial topics that risk reminding us of the cruelty of our history. No more excuses to avoid discussing the oppression from which so many citizens in our nation still suffer. If *To Kill a Mockingbird* makes people uncomfortable, it is doing something right. Harper Lee gave us a great gift that highlights humanity's worst faults, but still recognizes the marvelous ability of our species to learn from its mistakes.

While historical censorship isn't as much of a problem locally, it still matters that we treat it appropriately. Discriminatory language and cultures from history can't be ignored. Without education comes repetition. Like the characters in the novel, only by owning the painful facts can we go forward.

The Effects of Standardized Testing

By Mira Bohannan Kumar and Zoë Butler

