

Moms for Liberty goes to war with New York school over five library books

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Justin Rohrlach

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Moms for Liberty wants five books, some by bestselling authors, banished from an Upstate New York school library, claiming they contain “pornography” (AP)

Moms for Liberty, an [ultra-conservative parental rights outfit](#) the Southern Poverty Law Center [considers an extremist organization](#), is fighting to immediately remove five “obscene” library books from an Upstate [New York](#) public [school](#), insisting they are simply too dangerous to keep on the shelves.

The body of work being challenged supposedly “normalizes violence and abuse of women and children, depicts rape, equates violence and pain with pleasure, [and] encourages and normalizes early sexual activity among minors,” according to a petition filed this week in Wayne County Supreme Court by [Moms for Liberty](#) and an area [evangelical](#) pastor.

Republican presidential candidate [Donald Trump](#) is set to appear Friday evening at an event hosted by the group.

In their petition, the ardent [culture warriors](#) claim the books expose kids to “obscene depictions of sexually explicit acts.” The books in question include *People Kill People*, a YA novel by bestselling author Ellen Hopkins about the deleterious effects of gun violence; *It Ends With Us*, a romance novel by Colleen Hoover that was made into a Hollywood film starring Blake Lively; *All Boys Aren’t Blue*, a “memoir-manifesto” by journalist and LGBTQ activist George M. Johnson about his struggles growing up as a gay Black man; *Red Hood* by Elana K. Arnold, a retelling of *Little Red Riding Hood* centered on female empowerment; and Julia Scheeres’ *Jesus Land: A Memoir*, a *New York Times* bestseller about the author’s unpleasant childhood experience at a fundamentalist church camp.



Donald Trump will make his second appearance in two years at the annual Moms for Liberty confab in Washington, D.C. (AP)

Jonathan Burman, a spokesman for the New York State Education Department, told *The Independent* that leadership “stands 100 percent behind” state education commissioner Betty Rosa for keeping the five books on the shelves in the face of past challenges. In April, [Rosa ruled that Moms for Liberty had](#) “failed to demonstrate that the challenged books here lack ‘literary, artistic, political, or scientific value,” and suggested they had not even read the books they said they found so objectionable. To that end, some of the passages Moms for Liberty claimed were sexually explicit in fact had “nothing to do with sexuality,” Rosa wrote in her ruling.

But Moms for Liberty now argues that Rosa's decision was "arbitrary, an abuse of discretion, and based on a misapplication of the First Amendment," and are seeking an injunction to rid the library of the books while a lawsuit to ban them permanently winds its way through the courts.

Attorney Abigail Southerland, who is representing Moms for Liberty and serves as senior litigation counsel at the American Center for Law and Justice, a Christian nonprofit run by former [Trump impeachment lawyer Jay Sekulow](#), did not respond to a request for comment on Friday.

The case was [first reported locally by the Finger Lakes Times](#). Local chapter head Jennifer Williams told the outlet she would not comment until the case had been fully adjudicated. Moms for Liberty's attempts to remove books from school libraries [have spurred vehement backlash](#) across the nation.

The battle began in early 2023, when Rev. Jacob Marchitell, who heads up the Christ Community Church in Clyde, New York, filed a formal request with the school board to have the books removed from the Clyde-Savannah Junior/Senior High School library. A committee appointed by the board reviewed the books and found them to be perfectly acceptable, according to the petition. But when Marchitell increased the pressure, the board yanked the books anyway.



Moms for Liberty's book banning activities have spurred vehement opposition across the US (Original)

The school librarian and a teacher there filed an appeal, but the board reversed itself before a decision was handed down, the petition explains. Marchitell, now with Moms for Liberty on board, appealed the move, unsuccessfully, and in April 2024, Rosa ordered the books to remain on the shelves.

Moms for Liberty became involved because, according to the petition, “at least” five registered members of Moms for Liberty have children enrolled in the district and “will be exposed and/or have access to these lewd and sexually explicit materials when they visit the District’s Jr./Sr. High School Library.” A dozen or so more parents are members of the private Moms for Liberty page on [Facebook](#), the petition states.

This week’s petition, which initiated what is known as an Article 78 proceeding, runs a whopping 165 pages and includes specific examples of what Moms for Liberty and Marchitell find objectionable.

In addition to sex, Moms for Liberty’s petition says *People Kill People* “contains at least 137 profanities,” *It Ends With Us* “contains at least 105 profanities,” and *All Boys Aren’t Blue* “contains numerous profanities.” The petition flags no problematic profanity in *Red Hood* , but says it contains “numerous” instances of pornography, and that *Jesus Land* contains “several examples of sexually explicit content and profanities.”

“[T]he sexual content contained within these books is excessive and severely undermines any asserted literary value for the students given access to the school library,” the petition alleges.



Moms for Liberty co-founder Tiffany Justice will greet Donald Trump on Friday night at the group's yearly gathering (AP)

Moms for Liberty, which [last year helped ban a book about book bans](#), has come out in favor of Project 2025, a right-wing blueprint for a potential Trump administration that has been accused of veering into authoritarianism.

In a statement issued following Rosa's April decision against Moms for Liberty, New York Library Association President Lisa Kropp said, "The intimidation tactics used here are being repeated in classrooms and public libraries across the state and the country. As the voice of the library community in New York, NYLA will not allow this tactic to go unnoticed, unremarked, or unchallenged."

Trump, who has vowed to eliminate the US Department of Education if reelected, is making his appearance Friday evening with Moms for Liberty co-founder Tiffany Justice at the group's yearly meeting in Washington, D.C. It will be the [second time in two years he has shown up](#) at the annual confab.