

LVA

En vous appuyant uniquement sur les documents du dossier thématique qui vous est proposé, vous rédigerez une synthèse répondant à la question suivante :

What is at stake with censorship policies in American education?

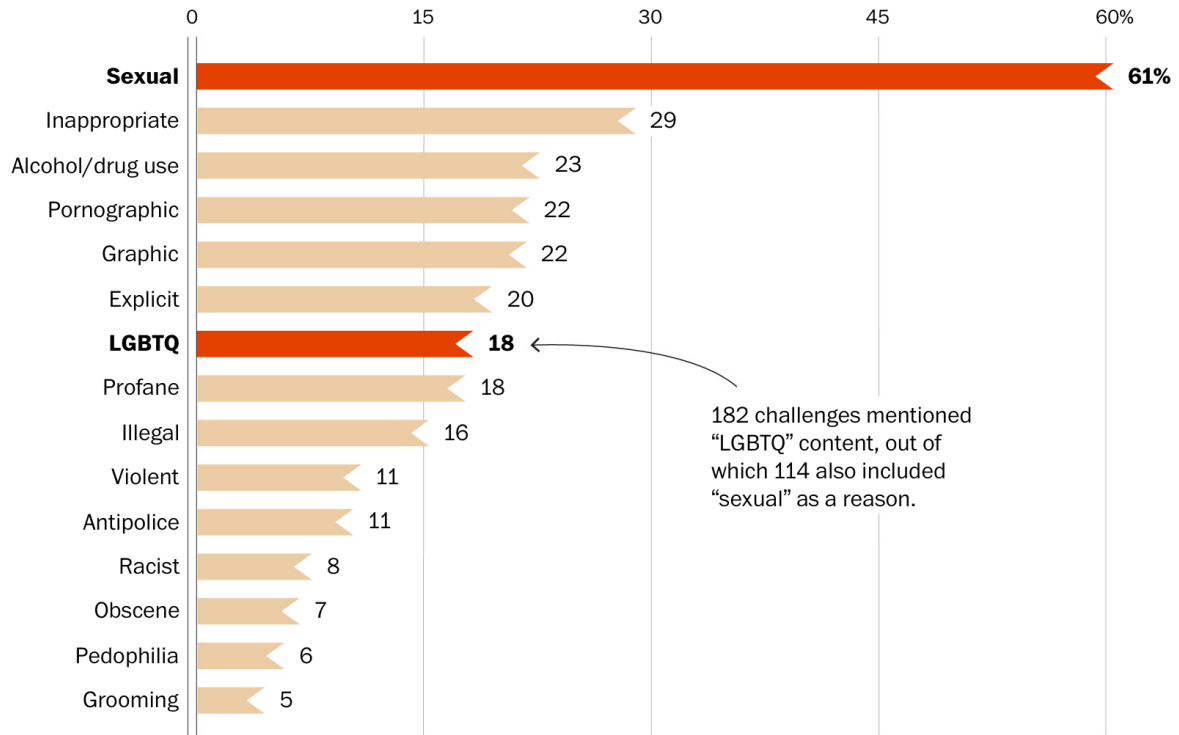
Votre synthèse comportera entre 450 et 500 mots et sera précédée d'un titre. Le nombre de mots rédigés (titre inclus) devra être indiqué à la fin de votre copie.

Liste des documents :

1. **Washington Post analysis of school district records**, June 2023
2. **Opinion: The censorship of critical race theory in American education**, *The Los Angeles Times*, by Chloe Chang, August 16, 2023
3. **Barack Obama condemns 'profoundly misguided' book bans**, *DW News*, by Kevin Tschierse, July 21, 2023
4. Cartoon from *LA Progressive*, 2022
5. **Opinion: These universities are pushing back on censorious students. Finally**, *The Washington Post*, April 29, 2023

Top 15 reasons given for book challenges from 2021-2022

Out of 986 total challenges in school libraries, 598 listed “sexual” content as a reason. The seventh most common reason was that the book featured LGBTQ people.

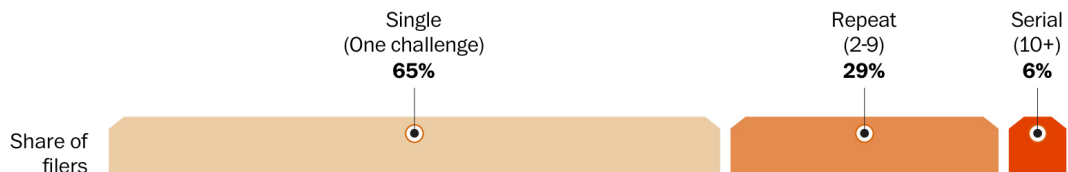


Note: Some challenges include multiple reasons, so total numbers may overlap. Percentages are rounded.
Source: Washington Post analysis of school district records.

A small number of people file a disproportionate number of book challenges

60% of challenges came from individuals who challenged at least 10 books.

Most filers only made a single challenge ...



... but most challenges came from serial filers



Note: Percentages are rounded and may not add up to 100.
Source: Washington Post analysis of school district records.

Document 2 – Opinion: The censorship of critical race theory in American education

The Los Angeles Times, by Chloe Chang, August 16, 2023

The United States' education system has long set the country apart from other nations. International students travel to study at American universities and the public school system, from elementary to secondary school, is consistently ranked highly in global rankings. However, the regulation of curriculum within that public system remains a matter of deep contention. As controversy unfolds, the importance of an informed and educated society is increasingly evident.

In September 2020, former President Donald Trump issued an executive order that was widely interpreted as an attempt to ban critical race theory (CRT) from being taught in classrooms. Since then, six states have taken steps to implement their own bans, while legislation is pending in 16 additional states. Statewide school boards in three states have also prohibited the teaching of CRT.

These censorship policies have sparked both anti-CRT and pro-CRT demonstrations in numerous states, reflecting the deep divide in opinions on the matter. Anti-CRT demonstrations have been held in 22 states, while pro-CRT demonstrations have been held in 24 states and in Washington, DC.

Critical race theory is a concept that aims to explain how discrimination and inequity are woven into laws, policies, and systems. [...]

Critics of CRT argue that the movement itself is discriminatory, as it assumes that all white individuals are inherently racist, while viewing all people of color as perpetual victims. Opponents of CRT contend that public funds should not be used to promote what they perceive as hate and racism. Representative Ron Nate, a Republican from Idaho, who co-sponsored a bill to ban CRT in the state, voiced his concerns to a local news station, stating, "CRT tries to make kids feel bad because of the color of their skin, or their sex, or any other category—one group is seen as an aggrieved minority and another group is the oppressive majority."

On the other side of the debate, supporters of critical race theory argue that its inclusion in classrooms promotes greater equity among racial groups in America, rather than mere

equality. They believe that efforts to eliminate discussions about racism and its historical impact contribute to the erasure of marginalized voices.

Proponents of CRT also assert that anti-CRT policies deprive students and teachers of the necessary skills, knowledge, and confidence to engage in critical conversations about race and societal issues within the classroom. [...]

As the debate surrounding critical race theory censorship policies rages on, the future remains uncertain. However, one thing is clear — the outcome of this contentious issue will have far-reaching implications for the education system and the country as a whole. Ultimately, the resolution of this debate will depend on the collective efforts of educators, policymakers, and communities to develop approaches that address the complex realities of racism while fostering an inclusive learning environment.

Document 3 - Barack Obama condemns 'profoundly misguided' book bans

DW, by Kevin Tschierse, July 21, 2023

Last year, a record number of 2,571 unique book titles were targeted for censorship in US public schools, often by parent-led groups. [...] The majority of these titles were written by or about members of the LGBTQ community and people of color. [...]

Deborah Caldwell-Stone, director of the ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom, writes, "Each attempt to ban a book by one of these groups represents a direct attack on every person's constitutionally protected right to freely choose what books to read and what ideas to explore".

Now the ALA has support in the form of an open letter from former US President Barack Obama, in which he criticizes the "profoundly misguided" right-wing efforts to ban books from public school libraries. [...]

Attempts to ban books in the US have become more organized in recent years, with right-wing minorities targeting books on LGBTQ topics or featuring Black characters and issues. Banning campaigns are orchestrated by groups like Moms for Liberty, which advocates for school book bans; Parents Defending Education, which strives to counter activists' efforts to introduce "harmful agendas" into schools [...].

And because these groups are so well-organized, they are being heard by politicians seeking electoral advantages, as in the case of Florida Governor Ron DeSantis. [...] The effectiveness of such campaign groups has led politicians in 10 US states to enact legislation to increase parental control over library content or restrict students' access to certain materials. [...]

In his open letter, Barack Obama [...] expressed special concern regarding the censorship of minority authors. Black-authored books subjected to school bans and censorship in various states include contemporary works such as, "The Hate U Give" by Angie Thomas, a powerful novel addressing racism and police violence; "Monday's Not Coming" by Tiffany D. Jackson, which sheds light on missing Black girls and women [...]. Historically relevant books are also in the eye of the censorship storm [...].

Barack Obama also emphasizes that it is "important to understand that the world is watching. If America — a nation built on freedom of expression — allows certain voices and ideas to be silenced, why should other countries go out of their way to protect them?"

And, indeed, he has a point. Other English-speaking democratic countries, like the UK, Canada, Australia or New Zealand, already seem to take inspiration from the US. Al Jazeera reports that as in the United States, governments in those countries are giving in to parents, religious groups or other staunch right-wing conservatives who push for these bans.

In the UK, for instance, there's a growing concern about critical race theory in schools, leading to the censorship and removal from school shelves of books exploring systemic racism, as well as children's books on diversity and LGBTQ identities. Canada is also witnessing parental groups requesting bans of books with LGBTQ content and seeking changes in curricular topics related to critical race theory. And Australia's Senate voted against the inclusion of critical race theory in the school curriculum in 2021. [...]

Document 4 – Cartoon from *LA Progressive*



Document 5 – Opinion : These universities are pushing back on censorious students. Finally, *The Washington Post*, April 29, 2023

In March, a Cornell University sophomore and member of the undergraduate student assembly saw a friend become visibly disturbed while reading “The Surrendered,” a Chang-rae Lee novel with a graphic rape scene. So she spearheaded a resolution that “implores all instructors to provide content warnings on the syllabus for any traumatic content that may be discussed.”

On the surface, this story has all the trappings of a wider phenomenon increasingly prevalent on American university campuses: the curtailing of academic inquiry, and sometimes even free speech, for the protection of perceived student “sensitivities” — invisible boundaries whose contours are never quite clear but almost always couched as

barriers against “harm.” What happened next is cause for celebration: The Cornell administration immediately struck down this resolution, a welcome reminder that academic institutions have the power to defend their fundamental values — and are willing to use it.

“We cannot accept this resolution as the actions it recommends would infringe on our core commitment to academic freedom and freedom of inquiry, and are at odds with the goals of a Cornell education,” wrote Cornell’s president [...].

Across the country, a growing number of administrations and faculties at universities both private and public alike are beginning to do the same, waking up to the realization that academic freedom needs to be protected, and that student outrage on social media should not dictate university policy.

Earlier this month, Neeli Bendapudi, the president of Penn State, released a recorded statement defending her university’s embrace of controversial speakers. The Supreme Court, she reminded her viewers, has long held that public universities such as Penn State are bound by the First Amendment. But she also reiterated a moral reason to continue welcoming diverse, and even offensive, opinions: “For centuries, higher education has fought against censorship and for the principle that the best way to combat speech is with more speech.”

A similar defense is being waged at private institutions. At Harvard University, a group of more than 50 faculty members last month established the Council on Academic Freedom, a group “devoted to free inquiry, intellectual diversity, and civil discourse.” [...] According to “The Academic Mind in 2022: What Faculty Think About Free Expression and Academic Freedom on Campus,” a national survey of approximately 1,500 faculty members at four-year colleges and universities conducted by the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression, a free speech advocacy group, one third of those polled feel they cannot express their opinions based on potential reaction from other members of their university communities — while more than half expressed concern about being fired because of someone misunderstanding a comment. [...]