

In response to a Request for Reconsideration of a Book or Other Library Material made for a eight books in the Harlem High School IMC collection, our committee was formed to review and assess whether or not each of the challenged books should remain in the HHS library. Each of the titles for which a Request for Reconsideration was made was read and reviewed by at least two committee members. Our response for each book is as follows:

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***Lawn Boy: A Novel***

*Lawn Boy* is a coming of age story of a young man from a family on the verge of eviction and poverty who is able to find success through opening a landscaping business and becoming an artist. The book is written from a perspective that would be important for students of color and LGBTQIA+ students to read. *Lawn Boy* depicts discriminatory attitudes and at times offensive language as a means of illustrating the difficulty of coming out, something many students may struggle with themselves. It teaches important lessons about persistence, acceptance, and chasing one's dreams. We recommend *Lawn Boy* remains in circulation.

***Monday's Not Coming: A Novel***

*Monday's Not Coming* covers difficult topics such as extreme poverty and trauma in an engaging way. None of the difficult subject matter is glamorized but it addresses real issues that impact teenagers across the country, including our students. We recommend *Monday's Not Coming* remains in circulation.

***Gender Queer: A Memoir***

*Gender Queer* is an authentic, honest memoir written in an engaging and highly-accessible format. Though some images and topics are blunt and/or surprising, we disagree with the claim that this Abraham Lincoln Award-nominated graphic novel should be defined as obscene material. Because *Gender Queer* depicts the author's very complex experiences with gender and sexual identity, the message it sends could not only be affirming to any student struggling to come to terms with their own identity but also instill a sense of empathy and compassion in

students who may not struggle with these issues. We believe this book could be an important source of recognition and validation for some students and should remain in our library.

### ***Beyond Magenta: Transgender Teens Speak Out***

*Beyond Magenta* collects true stories of transgender teens' experiences with coming to their own truth and facing the opinions and reactions of others. Each teen's story is presented in their own words through transcribed interviews and they provide readers with authentic, honest stories to which they may otherwise not have access. We believe this is a potentially life-saving book for our LGBTQIA+ students and a resource for any student seeking to learn more about what it means to be transgender and understand a reality that is not theirs.

### ***The Bluest Eye***

*The Bluest Eye* is a dense and literary text that is full of thoughtful language and symbolism. The message and purpose are clear and powerful. The book's characters have flawed and/or toxic views on race, body image, and sexuality, which send a message about the dangers of such views and their associated behaviors. It features troubling content and some disturbing scenes, but it will likely only be read by our most mature and ambitious readers. The themes and questions it provokes the reader to consider outweigh its content concerns. We believe *The Bluest Eye* should remain available for our high school students only.

### ***Out of Darkness***

*Out of Darkness* is an outstanding example of historical fiction that is written through multiple perspectives and tells its story through the voices of a diverse set of characters. It addresses racism, segregation, and other difficult topics without glossing over or ignoring the realities of those issues. We believe this book is valuable and should remain in our library.

### ***I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican American Daughter***

*I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican American Daughter* is highly-engaging, emotional, and well-written. It provides a realistic account of a high school experience while addressing trauma, depression, suicide, and other real life issues teens may encounter. The protagonist learns from

her mistakes and we do not believe the book glamorizes or endorses the more mature content that it does include. This book validates the experiences of students who can relate to its protagonist and is an important opportunity for some of our students to see themselves represented in a text. We believe *I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican American Daughter* should remain in our library.

### ***The Opposite of Innocent***

*The Opposite of Innocent* is a quick and accessible read which acts as a cautionary tale that addresses the way adults may groom or attempt to coerce adolescents. The narrator's experiences seem quite plausible, and the threat of coercion, grooming, and abuse is something students need to be educated about. While the subject matter itself is concerning, the author deals with it in an overall mild way and the story's focus is clearly on condemning her abuser's behavior and warning readers of the possibility of being coerced or groomed. It depicts her friends trying to help her get out of the situation and it ends with the victim breaking away from her abuser. It also includes resources at the end of the book for students to use in the event they are in danger or being groomed or abused. We believe this is an important and valuable text and that it should remain in our library.

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In summary, this committee does not recommend removing any of these challenged books from our high school library. While these books do discuss and depict mature topics, we believe each of them has value for our students. Many of them are authored by diverse voices and provide students with unique perspectives that would otherwise be missing from our catalogue. Furthermore, these texts offer students the opportunity to see themselves represented in the authors and/or characters, an important function of literature. A number of these books also provide resources for struggling students. We do not believe that any of the concerning material in these texts is presented without merit or purpose, nor do any of these texts glamorize or glorify harmful

behavior. Removing these books from our library would be a disservice to our students, particularly those who are most in need of reaffirming or representative literature.