

Teens' Rights Covered, But How Many Teens Care?

Lindsey Young

Teens, do you know where your rights are? In the blessed yet cursed age between child and adulthood, our line of rights as teenagers begins to blur. Administrators, parents, teachers, any adult in a position of power basically, would say that we, teenagers, don't have any rights, that we are given privileges. One sector of society, however, our gate keepers of knowledge, our saints of shushing, our winged-messengers of learning, our librarians, have got our backs, really.

In an informational session entitled, "We've Got Your Back: Teens and Librarians Speak Out on Intellectual Freedom," which was sponsored by IFRT and YALSA, the teen and the librarian panels did just that; speaking about censorship, freedom of speech and the first amendment. Both panels proved to have a healthy love for intellectual freedom.

Censorship is, after all, a tricky subject. As technology stealthily connects millions more to the informational superhighway each day, the effort to restrain teens and the cites they view grows stealthily as well. Our principals would say that these restrictions are for our safety; that we teenagers must be sheltered from the outside world, that we must be protected from the evils of the outside world, at least until two-thirty.

However, the bad news is not that teenagers are "protected" in such a way that their rights are violated, but that most teenagers do not even notice it. Whether because most teens are apathetic to intellectual freedom or because they have grown accustomed to the chains, most teens simply don't care.

It seems the only teens who do care for free speech are the ones who truly understand its meaning and value. I am talking about those teens that use words or even a canvas to express themselves: our school debaters, our music moguls, our reporters and journalists, those students who understand the significance of voicing what they have to say.

From the words of Traci Truly, lawyer and author of *Teen Rights*, "censorship and free speech, like beauty, is in the eyes and ears of the beholder."

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