

## Checked Out! Episode 11 Transcript

Georgia Grundy: Welcome to "Checked Out", the official podcast at the University Libraries and TLT. I'm Georgia Grundy, Electronic Reserves Technician for University Libraries and member of the Libraries Outreach committee.

The Libraries will be celebrating Banned Books Week September 27th to October 3rd. In a typical year, the outreach committee would be gearing up to host one of the library's most well-known events - the Edible Books Festival. This year, due to the pandemic, we've decided to celebrate here on "Checked Out" instead.

Banned Books Week was launched in the 1980's - a time of increased challenges, organized protests, and the Island Tree School District v. Pico 1982 Supreme Court case, which ruled that school officials can't ban books in libraries simply because of their content. It is an annual event celebrating the freedom to read. It spotlights current and historical attempts to censor books in libraries and schools and brings together the entire book community. Librarians, booksellers, publishers, journalists, teachers, and readers of all types, in shared support of a freedom to seek and to express ideas, even though some consider unorthodox or unpopular.

The books featured in this episode have all been targeted for removal or restriction in libraries and schools. By focusing on efforts across the country to remove or restrict access to books, Banned Books Week draws national attention to the harms of censorship. In this week's episode, you will hear from a variety of Libraries' faculty and staff as they share their favorite banned books with us as well as the reason why the book was banned. Thank you for tuning in, and enjoy the show.

Sasha Soleta: Thank you, Georgia, for that introduction. I am Sasha.

Sean Busey: And I'm Sean. Uh, welcome to "Checked Out", the podcast for the University of Nevada, Reno Libraries and TLT. Uh, this is a special episode, at least a special format episode. Uh, as a lot of people probably know, it's Banned Books Week.

Sasha: Yes. Which, Banned Books week for those who don't know is usually towards the end of September. And the only reason I know this is because every year, at the Knowledge Center, we usually hold an edible books festival in which you take names of books and then do a food display that's punny with it.

Sean: Yeah.

Sasha: And I love puns. So...

Sean: I used to actually submit in those when- back when people had a minimalist category because it required low effort. Uh, I did Ham on Rye one year and I literally just made a ham

sandwich on rye bread. And that was my lunch, by the way. I set it out there, and no one cared, I didn't win any votes, so I took my sandwich and ate it.

Sasha: Everybody touched it, and...

Sean: No, no. I was standing there watching. I was like if someone touches my sandwich, I'm not gonna eat it. No one touched it.

Sasha: He is the guard. The sandwich guard.

Sean: Yeah. I wanted to make sure. If it gets votes, I'll leave it. If it doesn't and no one touches it, you know, I'm hungry. It worked. And it happened. So...

Sasha: I'm so happy for you. But this year, because of obvious reasons, uh, we cannot do the Edible Books Festival.

Sean: Yeah.

Sasha: We had Georgia do our introduction for this episode, and she actually is the one that started the effort to have us do the Edible Books Festival at the library.

Sean: Yeah! Uh, and I know she's been involved with it for a long time. Um, I didn't think I would miss food-based literary puns. And, uh, I sure do. One of those things that, you know, kinda working in a library, you come to really appreciate...

Sasha: Food-based puns? \*Laughing\*

Sean: Yeah, but not just- yeah, but also the works that they're based on. You know, you realize how important that stuff is. Uh, so, for this episode, what we decided to do was to kind of reach out to all of you, and we have people reading from some of their favorite works that have faced challenges and censorship in the past for whatever reason. Uh, thank you to everybody that submitted. Uh, what do you think? Should we get to the readings now?

Sasha: Well, I think really quick, first, we need to do something very important, Sean. So, as you know, these are banned books, and a lot of them were banned for...reasons. Uh, some of these reasons are coarse language, crude language, cursing.

Sean: Ah, yes.

Sasha: There's gonna be curses.

Sean: Yeah. Yeah.

Sasha: There might be some swears, guys.

Sean: Yeah. You might be hearing some stuff that you might not expect on a library podcast. Uh, we're not big on censorship, so it stays in!

Sasha: Yes. Along with crude language or cursing, we're also gonna just throw in there, just to be safe, uh, parental advisory. There might be some more explicit things being read than you would be-

Sean: Yes.

Sasha: Than Sean and I usually say on this podcast.

Sean: Yeah.

Sasha: Well, wait. That Sean and I usually say that isn't edited out on this podcast. \*Laughing\*

Sean: \*Laughing\* Yeah. The things we say and the things you hear - not always the same.

Sasha: \*Laughing\* Uh-huh.

Sean: Uh, Yeah. Yeah. Good. I forgot about that. So, everyone, we can't imagine you're all that sensitive, but if you are, fair warning.

Sean: \*Laughing\*

Sasha: He's right.

Sean: Yeah.

Sasha: So, um, hey, Sean.

Sean: Yeah?

Sasha: Let's hear some \*bleep\* banned books, man! \*Laughing\*

Sean: \*Laughing\* \*bleep\* yes. Wait, did they just censor us?

Michelle Rebaleati: One Hundred Years of Solitude by Gabriel García Márquez

Maria Duque-Rueda: \*Reading aloud\* Many years later, as he faced the firing squad, Colonel Aureliano Buendía was to remember that distant afternoon when his father took him to discover ice.

At that time Macondo was a village of twenty adobe houses, built on the bank of a river of clear water that ran along a bed of polished stones, which were white and enormous, like

prehistoric eggs. The world was so recent that many things lacked names, and in order to indicate them it was necessary to point. Every year during the month of March a family of ragged gypsies would set up their tents near the village, and with a great uproar of pipes and kettledrums they would display new inventions.

First they brought the magnet. A heavy gypsy with an untamed beard and sparrow hands, who introduced himself as Melquíades, put on a bold public demonstration of what he himself called the eighth wonder of the learned alchemists of Macedonia. He went from house to house dragging two metal ingots and everybody was amazed to see pots, pans, tongs and braziers tumble down from their places and beams creak from the desperation of nails and screws trying to emerge, and even objects that had been lost for a long time appeared from where they had been searched for most and went dragging along in turbulent confusion behind Melquíades' magical irons.

'Things have a life of their own,' the gypsy proclaimed with a harsh accent. 'It's simply a matter of waking up their souls.' José Arcadio Buendía, whose unbridled imagination always went beyond the genius of nature and even beyond miracles and magic, thought that it would be possible to make use of that useless invention to extract gold from the bowels of the earth. Melquíades, who was an honest man, warned him: 'It won't work for that.' But José Arcadio Buendía at that time did not believe in the honesty of gypsies, so he traded his mule and a pair of goats for the two magnetized ingots. Úrsula Iguarán, his wife, who relied on those animals to increase their poor domestic holdings, was unable to dissuade him. 'Very soon we'll have gold enough and more to pave the floors of the house,' her husband replied.

For several months he worked hard to demonstrate the truth of his idea. He explored every inch of the region, even the riverbed, dragging the two iron ingots along and reciting Melquíades' incantation aloud. The only thing he succeeded in doing was to unearth a suit of fifteenth-century armour which had all of its pieces soldered together with rust and inside of which there was the hollow resonance of an enormous stone-filled gourd. When José Arcadio Buendía and the four men of his expedition managed to take the armour apart, they found inside a calcified skeleton with a copper locket containing a woman's hair around its neck.

Michelle: Alice's Adventures in Wonderland by Lewis Carroll

Laurel Baker: \*Reading aloud\* She stretched herself up on tiptoe, and peeped over the edge of the mushroom, and her eyes immediately met those of a large caterpillar, that was sitting on the top with its arms folded, quietly smoking a long hookah, and taking not the smallest notice of her or of anything else.

The Caterpillar and Alice looked at each other for some time in silence: at last the Caterpillar took the hookah out of its mouth, and addressed her in a languid, sleepy voice. 'Who are YOU?' said the Caterpillar. This was not an encouraging opening for a conversation. Alice replied, rather shyly, 'I--I hardly know, sir, just at present-- at least I know who I WAS when I got up this morning, but I think I must have been changed several times since then.' 'What do

you mean by that?' said the Caterpillar sternly. 'Explain yourself!' 'I can't explain MYSELF, I'm afraid, sir' said Alice, 'because I'm not myself, you see.' 'I don't see,' said the Caterpillar. 'I'm afraid I can't put it more clearly,' Alice replied very politely, 'for I can't understand it myself to begin with; and being so many different sizes in a day is very confusing.' 'It isn't,' said the Caterpillar. 'Well, perhaps you haven't found it so yet,' said Alice; 'but when you have to turn into a chrysalis--you will someday, you know--and then after that into a butterfly, I should think you'll feel it a little queer, won't you?' 'Not a bit,' said the Caterpillar.

Michelle: Beloved by Toni Morrison

Tati Mesfin: \*Reading aloud\* 'She was my best thing.' Paul D sits down in the rocking chair and examines the quilt patched in carnival colors. His hands are limp between his knees. There are too many things to feel about this woman. His head hurts. He suddenly remembers Sixo trying to describe what he felt about The Thirty-Mile Woman. 'She is a friend of mine. She gather me, man. The pieces I am, she gather them and give them back to me in all the right order. It's good, you know, when you got a woman who is a friend of your mind.' He is staring at the quilt but he is thinking about her wrought-iron back; the delicious mouth still puffy at the corner from Ella's fist. The mean black eyes. The wet dress steaming before the fire. Her tenderness about his neck jewelry - its three wands, like attentive baby rattlers, curving two feet into the air. How she never mentioned or looked at it, so he did not have to feel the shame of being collared like a beast. Only this woman Sethe could have left him his manhood like that. He wants to put his story next to hers. 'Sethe,' he says, 'me and you, we got more yesterday than anybody. We need some kind of tomorrow.' He leans over and takes her hand. With the other he touches her face. 'You your best thing, Sethe. You are.' His holding fingers are holding hers. 'Me? Me?'

Michelle: Charlotte's Web by E.B. White

Nicole Allen: \*Reading aloud\* It was a happy day for Wilbur. And many more happy, tranquil days followed. As time went on, and the months and years came and went, he was never without friends. Fern did not come regularly to the barn any more. She was growing up, and was careful to avoid childish things, like sitting on a milk stool near a pigpen. But Charlotte's children and grandchildren and great grandchildren, year after year, lived in the doorway. Each spring there were new little spiders hatching out to take the place of the old. Most of them sailed away, on their balloons. But always two or three stayed and set up housekeeping in the doorway. Mr. Zuckerman took fine care of Wilbur all the rest of his days, and the pig was often visited by friends and admirers, for nobody really ever forgot the year of his triumph and the miracle of the web. Life in the farm was very good--night and day, winter and summer, spring and fall, dull days and bright days. It was the best place to be, thought Wilbur, this warm delicious cellar, with the changing seasons, the heat of the sun, the passage of the swallows, the nearness of the rats, the sameness of the sheep, the love of the spiders, the smell of the manure, and the glory of everything. Wilbur never forgot Charlotte. Although he loved her children and grandchildren dearly, none of the new spiders ever quite took her place

in his heart. She was in a class all by herself. It is not often that someone comes along who is a true friend and a good writer. And Charlotte was both.

Michelle: Howl by Allen Ginsberg

Luka Starmer: \*Reading aloud\* I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness, starving hysterical naked, dragging themselves through the negro streets at dawn looking for an angry fix, angelheaded hipsters burning for the ancient heavenly connection to the starry dynamo in the machinery of night, whose poverty and tatters and hollow-eyed and high sat up smoking in the supernatural darkness of cold-water flats floating across the tops of cities contemplating jazz, who bared their brains to Heaven under the El and saw Mohammedan angels staggering on tenement roofs illuminated, who passed through universities of radiant cool eyes hallucinating Arkansas and Blake-light tragedy among the scholars of war, who were expelled from the academies for crazy & publishing obscene odes on the windows of the skull, who cowered in unshaven rooms in underwear, burning their money in wastebaskets and listening to the Terror through the wall, who got busted in their pubic beards returning through Laredo with a belt of marijuana for New York, who ate fire in paint hotels or drank turpentine in Paradise Alley, death, or purgatoried their torsos night after night with dreams, with drugs, with walking nightmares, alcohol and cock and endless balls, incomparable blind streets in shuddering cloud and lightning in the mind leaping toward poles of Canada & Paterson, illuminating all the motionless world of Time between.

Michelle: To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee

Maggie Ressel: \*Reading aloud\* 'Why there he is, Mr. Tate, he can tell you his name.' As I said it, I half pointed to the man in the corner, but brought my arm down quickly lest Atticus reprimand me for pointing. It was impolite to point. He was still leaning against the wall. He had been leaning against the wall when I came into the room, his arms folded across his chest. As I pointed he brought his arms down and pressed the palms of his hands against the wall.

They were white hands, sickly white hands that had never seen the sun, so white they stood out garishly against the dull cream wall in the dim light of Jem's room. I looked up from his hands to his sand-stained khaki pants; my eyes traveled up his thin frame to his torn denim shirt. His face was as white as his hands, but for a shadow on his jutting chin. His cheeks were thin to hollowness; his mouth was wide; there were shallow, almost delicate indentations at his temples, and his gray eyes were so colorless I thought he was blind. His hair was dead and thin, almost feathery on top of his head. When I pointed to him his palms slipped slightly, leaving greasy sweat streaks on the wall, and he hooked his thumbs in his belt. A strange spasm shook him, as if he heard fingernails scrape slate, but as I gazed at him in wonder the tension slowly drained from his face. His lips parted into a timid smile, and our neighbor's image blurred with my sudden tears. 'Hey, Boo,' I said.

Michelle: The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian by Sherman Alexie

Devon Marcille: \*Reading aloud\* 'Junior, why are you looking so sad?' Mom asked. She knew stuff. I didn't know how to start, so I just started with the biggest question.

'Who has the most hope?' I asked. Mom and Dad looked at each other. They studied each other's eyes, you know, like they had antennas and were sending radio signals to each other. And then they both looked back at me. 'Come on,' I said. 'Who has the most hope?' 'White people,' my parents said at the same time. That's exactly what I thought they were going to say, so I said the most surprising thing they'd ever heard from me.

'I want to transfer schools,' I said. 'You want to go to Hunters?' Mom said. It's another school on the west end of the reservation, filled with poor Indians and poorer white kids.

Yes, there is a place in the world where the white people are poorer than the Indians. 'No,' I said. 'You want to go to Springdale?' Dad asked. It's a school on the reservation border filled with the poorest Indians and poorer-than-poorest white kids. Yes, there is a place in the world where the white people are even poorer than you ever thought possible. 'I want to go to Reardan,' I said. Reardan is the rich, white farm town that sits in the wheat fields exactly twenty-two miles away from the rez. And it's a hick town, I suppose, filled with farmers and rednecks and racist cops who stop every Indian that drives through.

During one week when I was little, Dad got stopped three times for DWI: Driving While Indian.

But Reardan has one of the best small schools in the state, with a computer room and huge chemistry lab and a drama club and two basketball gyms. The kids in Reardan are the smartest and most athletic kids anywhere. They are the best. 'I want to go to Reardan,' I said again. I couldn't believe I was saying it. For me, it seemed as real as saying, 'I want to fly to the moon.' 'Are you sure?' my parents asked. 'Yes,' I said. 'When do you want to go?' my parents asked. 'Right now,' I said. 'Tomorrow.' 'Are you sure?' my parents asked. 'You could maybe wait until the semester break. Or until next year. Get a fresh start.' 'No, if I don't go now, I never will. I have to do it now.'

Sean: So those were some passages from some banned books.

Sasha: They sure were, Sean.

Sean: \*Laughing\*

Sasha: They sure were!

Sean: Yeah. Uh, we hope everybody enjoyed those as much as the readers enjoyed those works. I've read a fair number - not all of those - I've read a fair number of them. I enjoyed what I heard, there.

Sasha: I think it's a little interesting that a lot of these banned books that we see that were banned or challenged so long ago are now like required reading for a lot of people.

Sean: Yeah. And that's actually where I've read most of the ones that I read. They were, you know, course requirements during my college days. Uh, which- that's cool. That's good. That's a sign of progress.

Sasha: See, a lot of these, like, I remember reading *To Kill a Mockingbird* in like 9th grade, I think. Was that...?

Sean: Yeah. Yup.

Sasha: It was a high school read.

Sean: Yeah. Yup. I read *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian* my first year of college. Uh, I've actually read like four of Toni Morrison's books, but I've never read *Beloved*.

Sasha: I can't say I've read a lot of Toni Morrison, and that's disappointing. Perhaps after my month of spooky books, I'll get into some banned book action. \*Laughing\*

Sean: \*Laughing\* Uh, I like *Howl* by Allen Ginsberg. I've read that poem a few times. I wrote about it in courses - writing about, like, censorship.

Sasha: See, I never read *Howl* by Allen Ginsberg, but I know about Allen Ginsberg because of a special little time in high school. One of my close friends, we all had to do projects on a poet.

Sean: Okay.

Sasha: And so my friend got Allen Ginsberg approved as her topic which- I feel like as an English professor, or an English teacher - she wasn't a professor. This was, like, 11th grade. She should- I don't know. Perhaps have said, be careful with Ginsberg, because some of his stuff can be a bit much.

Sean: Yeah! Yeah, yeah. He's kind of famous for that.

Sasha: For an 11th-grade setting.

Sean: \*Laughing\*

Sasha: So it happened that our presentations on the subject were on a day she wasn't gonna be in class. So she had set up a video camera in the back. And so, my friend proudly comes up with her poster that has the poem *Pull My Daisy* on a poster board.

Sean: \*Laughing\*

Sasha: And she actually had like little petals she pulled off. She starts reading the poem. And if you don't know what it's about, go read the poem, kids. You'll figure it out pretty quick.

Sean: You'll love it.

Sasha: She...she did not realize until about halfway through that this was a horrible idea to say in class full of 11th-graders. So halfway through her presentation, she looks at the camera and she goes, "I regret doing this." But she finishes the poem, and then the teacher calls her into class and is like, the next day she gets called in after class, and, uh, the teacher goes, "I would have failed you and kicked you out of class if it wasn't halfway through you realized what a horrible idea it was and stopped."

Sean: I kinda feel like that wouldn't have stood. If you fail someone for doing that assignment when you knew ahead of time that they were gonna do that assignment.

Sasha: Right?

Sean: And without warning them? That's on you.

Sasha: Uh-huh!

Sean: You can't retroactively punish somebody like that.

Sasha: Because when you agree to let somebody do Ginsberg, that's...

Sean: Yeah.

Sasha: ...buyer beware on that one.

Sean: Yeah. Yeah. If you do not- If you don't know enough to make that warning, that's your education there, teacher.

Sasha: Uh-huh.

Sean: That's how you learn that lesson. Uh, we had some submissions. We want to take a moment to thank the ones that we have put in the episode. We have selections read from *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Gabriel García Márquez read by Maria Duque-Rueda.

Sasha: We had *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll read by Laurel Baker.

Sean: Uh, *Beloved* by Toni Morrison read by Tati Mesfin.

Sasha: *Charlotte's Web* by E.B. White read by Nicole Allen.

Sean: Uh, the poem Howl by Allen Ginsberg read by the podcast's own Luka Starmer. \*Laughing\*

Sasha: \*Laughing\* To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee read by the podcast's own Maggie Ressel.

Sean: Yeah. Uh, The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian by Sherman Alexie read by Devon Marcille. So thank you, uh, to all of you for submitting. Um, what do you think? Should we do the proper credits with our NPR voices now?

Sasha: Your hosts as always were Sasha Soleta and Sean Busey.

Sean: The guests were numerous and already named. The podcast's team: Jazmin Arevalo, Maggie Ressel, Michelle Rebaleati, Luka Starmer, Jill Stockton, and Joe Gurgui.

Sasha: A special thank you to Georgia Grundy for our introduction today. Episode music as always was "Better Days" by Lewin Wilkstrom, courtesy of Universal Production Music.

Sean: Thank you so much for listening. Until next time, this is "Checked Out" checking out.