

OAKLAND CITY COUNCIL

RESOLUTION NO. _____ C.M.S.

INTRODUCED BY COUNCILMEMBER DAN KALB

ADOPT A RESOLUTION (1) IN OPPOSITION TO BOOK BANS; (2) IN SUPPORT OF PROTECTING THE RIGHTS OF EVERY INDIVIDUAL TO ACCESS A WIDE VARIETY OF BOOKS IN LIBRARIES, SCHOOLS AND ELSEWHERE; (3) IN SUPPORT OF PUBLIC AND SCHOOL LIBRARIANS DEFENDING LITERARY FREEDOM AND DIVERSITY; AND (4) OPPOSING GOVERNMENT CENSORSHIP OF BOOKS

WHEREAS, reading is a foundational skill, critical to future learning and to exercising our democratic freedoms; and

WHEREAS, libraries and schools provide access to books that offer teachable moments for readers of all ages and expand our understanding of people with different backgrounds, ideas, and beliefs; and

WHEREAS, books are tools for understanding complex issues; and

WHEREAS, limiting young people's access to books does not protect them from life's complex and challenging societal issues; and

WHEREAS, young people deserve to see themselves reflected in a library's collection; and

WHEREAS, librarians are professionals trained to not impose their own thoughts and opinions on which ideas are right, but to make knowledge and ideas available so that people have the freedom to choose what to read; and

WHEREAS, a large majority of Americans across the political spectrum oppose book bans; and

WHEREAS, President Barack Obama said, "At a time when book banning is back in vogue, libraries remind us that truth isn't about who yells the loudest, but who has the right information"; and

WHEREAS, book bans harm communities; and

WHEREAS, groups such as PEN America, the American Library Association, the American Association of University Women, and others are calling attention to and pushing back against book banning by school boards and others around the country; and

WHEREAS, Mayor Sheng Thao is honoring *The Bluest Eye*, the novel by Toni Morrison, which contains themes of white supremacy, slavery, and gender violence and has been repeatedly banned from school districts throughout the country for decades; and

WHEREAS, Councilmember Kalb is honored to recognize Rupi Kaur's book of poems, "Milk and Honey." While the book was bestselling—selling more copies than *The Odyssey*—mentions of sexual assault resulted in the book becoming one of the most banned books in the US, concerning many survivors of sexual assault and violence who felt comforted and seen by the work; and

WHEREAS, Council President Bas is honored to recognize the work of Historian Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, and in particular her book 'An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States'. The centuries-long genocidal attempt against Indigenous people in the Americas is often omitted from American history. This book, the stories and the people and communities who were and are a part of them are a necessary staple in every household's bookshelves. District 2 is grateful for this beautiful book and if you haven't read it, welcome this as the invitation to do so; and

WHEREAS, Councilmember Fife honors *Catcher in the Rye*. While J.D. Salinger's award-winning novel has sold over 65 million copies with 1 million purchased annually, it is no stranger to censorship. Published in 1951, *Catcher* was banned in California in 1989. Between 1961 and 1982, it was the "most censored book in high schools and public libraries" in America with critics citing vulgar and immoral themes as the reason. Though still controversial, it remains one of the most relevant novels in American culture today; and

WHEREAS, Councilmember Treva Reid wishes to highlight the book *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker in support of the resolution in opposition to book bans. Written in 1983, Walker's fictional story of a young African-American girl in the rural South at the turn of the century delves into the topics of race, class, and societal norms. Censured in many countries for its real-life depictions of sexual assault, explicit language, homosexuality, and violence, *The Color Purple* has appeared in the American Library Association's list of 100 Most Frequently Challenged Books. Despite stirring controversy among certain circles, *The Color Purple* has received critical acclaim around the world, winning the 1983 Pulitzer Prize in Fiction. Later, it would be adapted into a film and musical. Councilmember Treva Reid is proud to highlight *The Color Purple* as evidence as to why Book Banning is counterintuitive to the progress of society, and

WHEREAS, Councilmember Jenkins recognizes *Bless Me, Ultima* by Rudolfo Anaya, a pillar in Latinx literature that has inspired generations of students; and

WHEREAS, Councilmember Kaplan recognizes *The Song of Solomon*, a 1977 novel by American author Toni Morrison, her third to be published. It follows the life of Macon "Milkman" Dead III, an African American man living in Michigan, from birth to adulthood. This novel won the National Book Critics Circle Award, was chosen for Oprah Winfrey's popular book club, and was cited by the Swedish Academy in awarding Morrison the 1993 Nobel Prize in literature. In 1998, the Radcliffe Publishing Course named it the 25th best English-language novel of the 20th century; now therefore be it

RESOLVED that the Oakland City Council hereby opposes government censorship of books, and endorses the following statement: Individuals should be trusted to make their own decisions about what they read and believe. Further, parents should not be making decisions for other parents' children about what they read. We are united against book bans; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED that the Oakland City Council fully respects and supports the work and determination of public and school librarians to promote diversity and defend literary freedom; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED that we, the City of Oakland, will act to protect the rights everyone to access a wide variety of books in schools, in libraries, and elsewhere.

IN COUNCIL, OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA,

PASSED BY THE FOLLOWING VOTE:

AYES - FIFE, GALLO, JENKINS, KALB, KAPLAN, RAMACHANDRAN. REID AND
PRESIDENT FORTUNATO BAS

NOES –

ABSENT –

ABSTENTION –

ATTEST:

ASHA REED
City Clerk and Clerk of the Council of the
City of Oakland, California