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WILLIAM HENDERSON SEPTEMBER 10, 2008

Challenges Continue in Colorado Against 'Uncle Bobby's Wedding'

Mass. Author Still Hopes to One Day Publish Sequel

The children's picture book "Uncle Bobby's Wedding" by local author Sarah Brannen [See The Very True Story of Two Guinea Pigs in Love, Issue 1731, Page 25] has been challenged again by parents at a library in Colorado, though Douglas County Libraries head librarian Jamie LaRue continues to stand by his decision to shelf the book in the library.

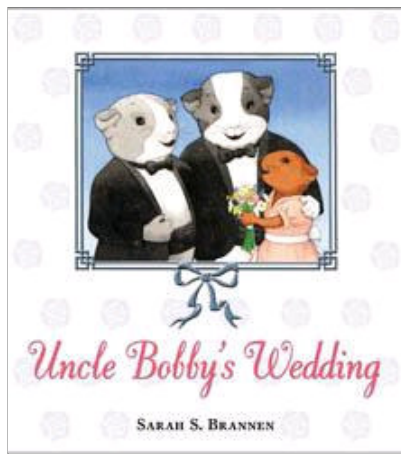
"'Uncle Bobby's Wedding' is a children's book, appropriately categorized and shelved in our children's picture book area," he wrote to one parent who complained about the book, later making the letter public on his blog, <http://jaslarue.blogspot.com>. "[T]here are lots of books in our collection that people won't agree with; there are certainly many that I object to. Library collections don't imply endorsement; they imply access to the many different ideas of our culture, which is precisely our purpose in public life."

Brannen this week said she has not yet heard from anyone who doesn't like the book, but she's keeping track of what's happening in Colorado. She says she is thinking about taking a trip out there to see a friend and may check in with the library to offer people who like and don't like the book to speak with her about it.

"I knew some people wouldn't like it, but I'm bemused that people still try to take things out of libraries in this day and age," she said.

"Maybe if I came in and they came in we could talk about the book and they could understand where I'm coming from and I could understand where they're coming from and we could understand each other a little bit better."

Anita Gohde is one parent who has publicly challenged the book, which describes the



"Uncle Bobby's Wedding"

New England Blade

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relationship between a child and her uncle as he prepares to marry his boyfriend. (Do we even need to say that these character's are guinea pigs?). Gohde has organized others around banning the book from her public library.

"I am offended. Shouldn't I have the right to voice my opinion and to take my young daughter to the public library without concern that she will choose a book that promotes gay marriage — a view that is a slap in my face?" asked Gohde.

But not a slap in the face of everyone, as the book was selected to be included on the BookSense Spring 2008 list of recommended books. This list is generated by and distributed through independent bookstores around the country.

The attempt to ban "Uncle Bobby's Wedding in this particular Colorado library, though, is just one of several ongoing efforts to teach children "to be ashamed of their families," says Boston-based Family Equality Council Executive Director Jennifer Chrisler, who goes on to say that the organization is working with parents and families to make "change in schools across this country so that all loving families are recognized, respected, protected and celebrated."

"This isn't the first time a book has been challenged for representing LGBT families. And it certainly won't be the last," says Chrisler, who outlines what the Family Equality Council is doing over the next 12 months to build better schools and school environments for all children, not just GLBT kids or kids with GLBT parents.

The organization is conducting a school-themed OUTSpoken training in Alabama to equip our parents and allies with tools and tactics for creating inclusive schools; organizing parents and allies in three more Minnesota school districts during 2008-2009 to help facilitate immediate change; creating a special schools Web page with tools and tactics for parents or guardians to use to change schools for the better (including how to donate inclusive books and actions to take when books are being challenged); revamping its existing schools publications and book lists and launching a new edition of its Rainbow Report Card; and performing at least 15 trainings and consultations in Minnesota, for teachers, staff, and administrators about GLBT-headed families and the needs of children with GLBT

parents.

"When my twins, Tim and Tom, are in their classroom, I want to make sure that they can speak of their two mommies with joy and pride. I want to know that books that represent our family, such as 'Uncle Bobby's Wedding,' aren't hidden in some back corner of the library," said Family Equality Council Executive Director Jennifer Chrisler.

"Together, we will ensure that our schools don't just teach the alphabet, multiplication and geography, but the values of love, justice, family and equality." //

For more information go to www.familyequality.org or www.sarahbrannen.com.

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