

# THE EDITOR'S LETTER, #1

**“Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.”**

**-George Santayana**

In one singular academic year, over 6,870 books were banned in schools across the United States. <sup>1</sup>

36% of these banned books featured people of colour.

29% included LGBTQ+ characters and themes. <sup>2</sup>

And, despite being only a quarter into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, 16.62% of all recorded book bans have taken place in this period. <sup>3</sup>

**Literature has always been, and will always be, political.**

Following the rapidly rising global book bannings, it's important now more than ever to focus on the representation of politics and space within literature, and to really take in the messages that have been left to us. That is why this special issue focuses on *Conflict and Control within Public Spaces*.

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<sup>1</sup> 'The Normalization of Book Banning', *PEN America*, < <https://pen.org/report/the-normalization-of-book-banning/>> [Accessed 11 January 2026].

<sup>2</sup> Carly Tagen-Dye, 'Explicit' Sex Claims 'Exaggerated,' Black and LGBTQ+ Characters Overwhelmingly Targeted, New Book Ban Analysis Finds', *People*, <<https://people.com/sex-claims-exaggerated-black-and-lgbtq-characters-targeted-by-book-bans-11687152>> [Accessed 11 January 2026].

<sup>3</sup> Dimitrije Curcic, 'Global Book Banning Statistics', *WordsRated*, <<https://wordsrated.com/global-book-banning-statistics/>> [Accessed 11 January 2026].

Throughout this issue, the idea of suppression, marginalisation, and regulation within communal places is explored, presenting the idea that authority and governance can destroy and completely redefine what it means to be free.

From Zusak's *'The Book Thief'*, to Orwell's *'1984'*, this special issue explores past, present and future conflicts, crafting a clever insight into what it means to be human in a world governed by censorship and oppression, and how one can resist the control to defy restrictions.

You'll find that we continue this exploration within the book reviews. We acknowledge all forms of control that dominate our world, questioning them. What does it take to escape this confinement? Is a public space without any conflict or control truly achievable? Will we finally learn from literature, or will we continue to let it sit, ignored, or even, *banned*?

We hope this special edition will have a profound impact on everyone who reads it, just like it had on us whilst writing it. It has been a wonderful experience working on this collection, especially alongside our incredible writers, and we hope you can appreciate all the hard work that went into this project.

I hope you enjoy reading, and can take away a lot from this.

**Chloe Elweiler**

*Managing Editor and Editor in Chief*