

From: *Daphne Patai. Ray Bradbury Saw the PC Lunacy Coming/
Minding the Campus. Reforming Our Universities.*

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... The logic of this society is explained ... to the rebellious protagonist
[of Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*]:

“Bigger the population, the more minorities. Don't step on the toes of the dog-lovers, the cat-lovers, doctors, lawyers, ..., chiefs, Mormons, Baptists, ... second-generation Chinese, Swedes, Italians, Germans, Texans, ... people from Oregon or Mexico... The bigger your market, the less you handle controversy, remember that! ...

... There was no dictum, no declaration, no censorship, to start with, no! Technology, mass exploitation, and minority pressure carried the trick, thank God. Today, thanks to them, you can stay happy all the time, you are allowed to read comics...

A book is a loaded gun in the house next door. Burn it. Take the shot from the weapon. Breach man's mind....

You must understand that our civilization is so vast that we can't have our minorities upset and stirred. Ask yourself, What do we want in this country, above all? People want to be happy, isn't that right?...

... Coloured people don't like *Little Black Sambo*. Burn it. White people don't feel good about *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Burn it. Someone's written a book on tobacco and cancer of the lungs? The cigarette people are weeping? Burn the book. "

R. Bradbury. Fahrenheit 451

Books may cause unhappiness and dissent. The theme is not a new one, but what makes Bradbury's treatment of it compelling to this day is his understanding that it doesn't take an authoritarian government to impose such restrictions on the public.

[...] In early 2011, as so often happens, life imitated art. News of a bowdlerized reprint of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* elicited an outcry from librarians and others. Article after article ridiculed the project, which aimed to salvage Twain's classic for young readers by replacing the offensive “N-word”—used over 200 times in

the novel—with the word “slave.” And yet, ironically, these defenders of free expression typically went to great lengths themselves to avoid using the word “n....”, and thus were not exactly beacons of light in the fight for free speech and literary integrity.

What would Ray Bradbury have said about this controversy? Perhaps he would have noted that few university professors these days defend free expression on college campuses [...] Have [the university professors] ... and the students demanding regulatory action, given any serious thought to precisely what life is like under regimes that curtail speech not through suasion but through the threat of punishment and legal action?

... Writing *Fahrenheit 451* in the period of McCarthyism, Ray Bradbury stayed away from satire. Rather, he saw beyond the immediate issue of political repression and to the much more subtle problem of cultural repression.

In the early years of television, he could already envision a population preferring to interact with a television screen rather than with one another, and, eager to avoid unpleasantness, opting for comfort over imagination.

To underscore the point in *Fahrenheit 451*, Bradbury includes a scene involving a former English professor named Faber, who had been thrown out of work when the last liberal arts college had closed its doors decades earlier due to sheer lack of students and patronage. Books had to be destroyed, Faber explains to the protagonist, because

“They show the pores in the face of life. The comfortable people want only wax moon faces, poreless, ... expressionless.

[...] The things you are looking for ... are in the world, but the only way the average chap will ever see ninety-nine per cent of them is in a book. ... And don't look to be saved in any *one* thing, person, machine, or library.”

R. Bradbury. Fahrenheit 451

... For Bradbury, in *Fahrenheit 451*, the solution was to ... become one of the Book People ... to keep the great works alive.

<https://www.mindingthecampus.org/2012/06/10/ray-bradbury-saw-the-pc-lunacy-coming>