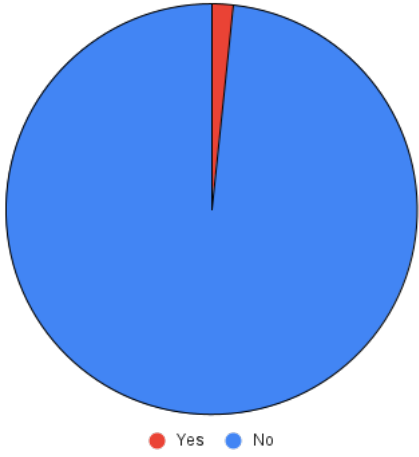


What's Your Opinion?

We asked our followers on Instagram if they thought banning books containing topics like racism and antisemitism from schools was a good idea.

Out of 57 responses:  
Yes – 1  
No – 56



Next Poll:

**Real Gamer Hours**  
Did you see any games you were excited for on today's Nintendo Direct?



Scan the QR code above to see previous poll results.

Students can answer polls on Mondays by visiting The Herald's Instagram page, [@astateherald](#).

These and future articles can be found on the Opinion section of The Herald's website. All comics and memes can be found in the Comics section.

JORDAN HEARRING  
STAFF WRITER



Jordan Hearring is a junior vocal music education major from Minot, ND.

In my three years attending Arkansas State University, I have faced a very unsettling and rather unusual challenge. This challenge, for many, isn't something they really think about when they're out in public. They may not even think about it at all. This challenge, however, is one that potentially affects many in the student body like myself, and can cause waves of melancholy and a form of anguish that none can truly understand except for, well, folks like me. The unfortunate reality is that it feels like there may be no immediate solution to this problem, and it will require a discouraging amount of effort to solve it. What is the challenge, you may ask?

There are no easily accessible gender-neutral bathrooms on campus.

As a gender nonconforming individual, I find that anytime I'm away from my apartment and in between classes I am faced with the constant reminder that

society, although evolving, still remains mostly and exclusively binary. Many of the buildings on campus are older and any form of addition or renovation would result in the entire building needing to be redone. However, the Humanities building was recently built and yet there are no gender neutral bathrooms. The Fine Arts Center (where many of my classes are as a music major), the Dean B. Ellis Library and even the Reng Student Union have no gender neutral bathrooms on any of their floors.

In the United States, it's estimated that more than 1 million adults identify as nonbinary or gender nonconforming, and that's just those who have come out and disclosed their gender identity according to the Washington Post, and 2 million more identified as transgender or non-binary in the 2020 census according to NPR. What portion of that percentage may be within our own student body, whether they're out or not?

I've asked around for some opinions on this unfortunate circumstance within the small but vocal gender nonconforming community at A-State. Rike Robinson, a sophomore music composition major from Jonesboro, Arkansas, says, "Ultimately, for me, the problem stretches further than the lack of gender neutral bathrooms. The fact that they are so inaccessible and that the average person doesn't know if/where one is on campus is enough to make me wonder if the campus administration is committed to

providing a safe and inviting environment for all of its students, and you also have to consider the message the administration is sending when they haven't installed any in the new buildings that have popped up recently. The reasons they have for not including gender neutral bathrooms are rooted in dated beliefs and that alone is a glaring issue."

Lily Sadler, a senior history education major from Lake Village, Arkansas, says, "It's annoying. All the bathrooms are either boy or girl and if there is a gender neutral bathroom, it also serves as a disabled bathroom, which is fine, but it makes me less inclined to use it in case a disabled person needs it. I automatically go to the women's restroom, not only because so many people perceive me as such, but also because I feel like I would be judged for using the men's room. It's frustrating to only have the binary options even though Arkansas State is supposed to be diverse."

The issues that Rike and Lily have brought up are issues I share with them as well. The inconvenience of being surrounded by a community that claims to be supportive and accepting while still not having basic amenities such as an affirming bathroom, and the lack of awareness within the administration of the students they represent, affect me as well. There is, however, another

concern that the gender nonconforming community face, even if there are gender-neutral bathrooms installed: will our safety and our rights be protected if the administration has already failed to recognize this portion of their student body?

The solution to this harrowing issue would ideally be to find somewhere in every building on campus to install these restrooms. They would be single-stall family-style restrooms that would accommodate the gender nonconforming population on campus and wouldn't draw attention if one were to use them. The point isn't necessarily to appeal only to nonconforming or transgender individuals, but to have amenities more accessible to these individuals so they don't feel like they're only limited to the binary options, the options that the administration are clearly unaware of changing and expanding to more reaffirming options.



Art by Fran Bollinger | Content Creator

"The privilege of choice comes with the responsibility to learn."

LILY CABIBI-WILKIN  
OPINION EDITOR



Lily Cabibi-Wilkin is a senior music composition major from Hot Springs.

As someone raised Jewish, I have known about the events of the Holocaust my whole life. I lit candles for Yom Ha'atzmaut. I listened to stories from Holocaust survivors who narrowly escaped death in concentration camps. I walked through the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C., and knew most of the information it provided before I set foot in the door. I have seen "Schindler's List" twice, and read Maus more times than that.

This was not a choice. You do not get a choice when you're Jewish. The Holocaust is something you learn about over and over again. It does not matter how old you are. By the time you approach the topic in public school, you know the most of anyone in the room. People ask you if you know any survivors, or if you had

any relatives who died. You do not get a choice.

You might think then, "wouldn't you want a choice? Wouldn't you want to protect other children from this knowledge? Wouldn't you want to ban books like 'Maus' from children's schools, and wait until children are older to tell them about what happened?"

No. Not at all.

Children understand things better if they learn them at a young age. We know this about reading, about learning languages or tying shoes. Why should history be any different? The privilege of choice comes with the responsibility to learn – those who are not forced to learn about the Holocaust because of their religion should learn about it for that very reason.

In the case of the board of trustees of McMinn County Schools in Athens, TN, "Maus" by Art Spiegelman was removed from the 8th grade English Language Arts curriculum in a unanimous vote over concerns the book wasn't age-appropriate. The board specifically cited "unnecessary" profanity (eight swear words), a small drawing of a nude woman and mentions of murder, violence and suicide.

"Maus" does include all of these things, to be fair. The people in life-or-death situations swear. The traumatized mother who has killed herself in the bathtub is

naked. The Nazis murder people. There is certainly violence in the Holocaust. It is impossible to discuss it without mentioning the harm brought to Jewish, Romani, LGBT and disabled people. But are these things impossible to look past? Is one scene with a tiny image of a nude woman enough to declare a whole book pornography?

Yes, the Holocaust was a violent, bloody time, and I am certainly not suggesting we show two-year-old-Timmy "Schindler's List." But 8th graders, 13-year-olds, should certainly be able to handle the reality of what happened. They see worse in their schools, or in the shows they watch or the books they read.

In a response to the backlash after this vote, the board gave a statement that said, "We do not diminish the value of Maus as an impactful and meaningful piece of literature, nor do we dispute the importance of teaching our children the historical and moral lessons and realities of the Holocaust. To the contrary, we have asked our administrators to find other works that accomplish the same educational goals in a more age-appropriate fashion. The atrocities of the Holocaust were shameful beyond description, and we all have an obligation to ensure that younger generations learn of its horrors to ensure that such an event is never repeated. We simply do not

believe that this work is an appropriate text for our students to study."

If the McMinn County School board is prepared to find works of equal teaching value, then fine. I'm glad that they at least understand the importance of teaching the Holocaust. But I am tired of this being up for debate. I am tired of watching schools ban books on histories they are uncomfortable with. I am tired of a section of the population spending years pretending the Holocaust never happened, only to turn around and liken themselves to its victims when they are asked to wear masks. Perhaps a better education on the seriousness of the Holocaust would prevent that. Whatever McMinn County chooses to replace "Maus," it had better be good.



Art by Thinh Vu | Content Creator

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