

Censorship Report: *Sold*

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LIS 411: Collection Development and Management

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April 11, 2025

The censorship and controlling the narrative is not just a contemporary issue, but a timeless problem that has plagued civilization as long as we can remember, and likely before that. With seventy-two percent of censorship demands coming from government entities (ALA, 2023), conspiracy theory merges into reality relatively quickly when you consider some of the material that comes under scrutiny today. Patricia McCormick's *Sold* could definitely be considered one of those highly questionable materials, as in why such a relative and vitally important topic would ever be censored in today's world. This work has "claimed to be sexually explicit, depiction of sexual assault" (ALA, 2023) by some, and when considering what the material covers, one has to question why anybody would not desire to have this in their collection. The triumph of a young woman over sex trafficking is what this book centers on (Barnes & Noble, 2008), which is something that is all too real for countless people. With recommendations from the American Library Association (ALA) Bill of Rights, such as libraries providing material that serves the "interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves" (ALA, 2019), it's hard to imagine any community *Sold* would not serve.

This content further exemplifies "the widest diversity of views and expressions, including those that are unorthodox, unpopular, or considered dangerous by the majority" (ALA, 2006), which is a right highly recommended by the ALA. The exact location of the censorship is not specified by the ALA, which generates its report "based on information from confidential reports filed by library professionals," usually coming from libraries and schools (ALA, 2023). How could such a sensitive topic ever be justly addressed without being explicit in covering sexual assault? With reports of seven out of ten human trafficking victims being women and girls,

causing countless of psychological and traumatic disorders for its victims (APA, 2023), its hard to imagine how material like *Sold* could ever be considered for censorship.

The only imaginable case that could be made to not include this material for a collection would be for the concern or fear of re-traumatizing a victim of human trafficking. Yet, the cost of awareness of this horrific reality to anybody that could be ignorant of the tragic truth of human trafficking could outweigh the possibility of harming someone's sensibilities. In certain circumstances explicit and descriptive imagery is not only beneficial for the author to convey to the reader the importance of their message, but it is even required when tackling such a sensitive subject. The numerous positive book reviews recognize this essential element of using sexually explicit descriptions to accurately depict the iniquitous truth of trafficking (Barnes & Noble, 2008). If the majority of the public understands the intention and agrees with the author's proper application of implementing such elements in their material, then a collector must recognize the value that product has to offer. Attempting to censor such material would violate the third and fourth ALA freedom to read propositions, which is related to barring content based on personal beliefs and "inhibit the efforts of writers to achieve artistic expression" (ALA, 2006).

Although we are past the days of book burnings or burning witches at the stake in a literal sense, collectively society has much further to go regarding information availability. While I could imagine a collector having some difficulty reviewing or vetting material as that which is covered in *Sold*, especially if the collector themselves might have had some personal experience with sex trafficking, the public awareness of such occurrences is worth the investment and establishing the resilience to digest such difficult concepts. Even in a community where such material is not demanded, a book like *Sold* would likely be worth the risk of exposing any community to the content it covers.

I come from a very unique position on topics such as human trafficking, specifically child sex trafficking. Having traveled all over the world and worked in several federal law enforcement agencies, which led to my nonprofit focused on child sex trafficking awareness, it is difficult to remain objective on such a topic. Empirical evidence and years of extensive anecdotal data gathered on my part has confirmed the depth of this issue globally, a depth that reaches the smallest towns in America as well. With this knowledge base and analysis of the information that is readily available by way of open source to the public, it is difficult to deny that books like *Sold* would be vastly beneficial to any and all collectors out there. The information provided by the ALA regarding the rights people should have to access most information further illustrates why a book like *Sold* should never be considered for censorship by any institution or governing body. From the most fundamental deductive reasoning position, one must ask, who would benefit from such censorship and who would benefit from being introduced to such material? The ALA guidelines and propositions are clear on what information should be accessible to the public, and *Sold* should be easily categorized as something everyone and anyone has access to. The better question to ask is who would gain from censoring such material and what level of power and influence do they possess? Answers to questions like these are why the ALA and books like *Sold* exist, and they exist to get readers like us to find those answers.

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