

# American Library Association Marxist lesbian president

BY VALERIE RICHARDSON THE WASHINGTON TIMES, Aug. 31, 2023

American public libraries were already feeling the heat for hosting drag queen story hours and feuding with Christian actor Kirk Cameron before word broke that the American Library Association's newly installed president calls herself a "Marxist lesbian."

Now, the nation's largest library association is having a Bud Light moment. Pressure is mounting on conservative leaning states to sever ties with the 147-year-old "voice of America's libraries" over concerns about the leftist advocacy of American Library Association President Emily Drabinski.

Ms. Drabinski was voted president-elect in April 2022. In a now-deleted tweet, she said, "I just cannot believe that a Marxist lesbian who believes that collective power is possible to build and can be wielded for a better world is the president-elect of @ALALibrary."

The tweet resurfaced, and the blowback was immediate. The Montana State Library Association voted last month to break off from the American Library Association, saying the state constitution "forbids association with an organization led by a Marxist." Texas has done the same, said state Rep. Brian Harrison, a Republican.

The State Freedom Caucus Network led a dozen conservative groups in calling on states to "ensure that no taxpayer dollars can be used by these associations or by state and local libraries to support the ALA in any way."

"Our libraries are local treasures," the Aug. 3 open letter says. "We will not let them be overrun and held hostage by a radical organization acting well outside what its core mission should be."

Trent Talbot, president and founder of Brave Books, which publishes Mr. Cameron's children's stories and sponsors his library tour, said Ms. Drabinski should be "removed from her position immediately."

"Until that happens, we will continue to advocate for states to stop supporting the ALA with funding," Mr. Talbot told The Washington Times. "It has been incredible seeing several states choose to do this and stop funding an organization that is for the corruption and confusion of our kids."

Ms. Drabinski defended her tweet in an interview with NBC News. She said she was "excited to highlight and celebrate two aspects of my identity that are really important to me and are often under a lot of scrutiny."

"I didn't anticipate these kinds of targeted attacks being used as a bludgeon against library workers across the country," she said. "I really think that is regrettable, and I wish that wasn't happening right now."

In her corner is the New York Library Association, which said Friday that "we condemn the backlash towards the American Library Association's President, Emily Drabinski."

"With the uptick of challenges to books and programs featuring the LGBTQ+ community, it is not surprising to hear the recent uproar of lawmakers across the country calling for the defunding of the American Library Association," the NYLA statement said. "We know clearly that their concerns are rooted in their discomfort at the power of an outspoken and public member of the LGBTQ+ community being exactly who she is without fear."

After the Montana vote, the American Library Association issued a statement saying it values "diversity in perspective and background." Without mentioning Ms. Drabinski, it said the organization's president makes decisions in consultation with an elected 15-member executive board and an elected 131-member council.

The association said it has awarded \$218,000 in grants to 23 Montana libraries over the past two years.

“Despite the decision in Montana this week, ALA remains committed to providing essential support, resources, and opportunities for every library and library worker in every state and territory across the nation to help them better serve their communities,” the association said.

Meanwhile, an online “letter of support” praising Ms. Drabinski as a “compassionate, capable and courageous” leader has gathered more than 2,300 signatures, many of them from librarians and American Library Association members. “We are living in times where homophobia is rampant in libraries, with library workers at risk of physical violence and online harassment on a regular basis,” the letter said. “State library associations that aren’t standing up to homophobic anti-book and -library groups are not doing their jobs as library advocates.”

The left-wing outlet Jacobin blasted the Montana commission’s withdrawal with a post headlined “Montana Conservatives Are Stoking McCarthyist, Homophobic Attacks on a Librarian.”

Critics of Ms. Drabinski say such defenses are smokescreens for her far-left political agenda.

The American Accountability Foundation, a conservative opposition research group, delved into her previous articles, interviews and statements. In a memorandum, it concluded that “Emily Drabinski is a radical, self-avowed Marxist and queer activist.”

The memo quotes Ms. Drabinski as saying her “queerness includes the subversion of those kind of normal family types” by criticizing the “Christo-fascist right,” defending drag queen story hours and reimagining libraries as a “space based on an ideology that centered notions of queerness and difference rather than democracy and citizenship.”

She criticized the Dewey Decimal System for including “overwhelmingly Christian” works in a 2013 article headlined “Queering the Catalog: Queer Theory and the Politics of Correction.”

In a 2019 article, she said libraries could respond to the election of President Trump by creating “research guides that help people understand how to resist authoritarian regimes.”

In 2022, Ms. Drabinski called it a “principle of librarianship” that “every reader has a right to decide for themselves what they read. And that includes children.”

Given that she was elected president in April 2022 and assumed office in July, “I think that’s a pretty clear reflection of where a large portion of her membership is, which is unfortunate,” said Tom Jones, president of the American Accountability Foundation.

“I think that The question becomes: Is this an organization that should have such a leadership role in our local libraries? The answer for most of America is no,” Mr. Jones said. “New York, San Francisco, Chicago, the answer’s probably yes, but for the rest of America, these are not the people we want influencing the purchasing list at our small local library. Unfortunately, they are.”

As the nation’s leading library organization, the American Library Association offers professional development, gives awards and grants, and advocates for libraries and librarians, including those at schools. The Chicago-based group has about 50,000 members.

“It’s a multimillion-dollar organization that has a 100-plus-year history,” Mr. Jones said. “We see this with a lot of professional associations. They do a lot of the nonpolitical stuff — training, technical standards — but then they come over the top with a heavy dose of political activism that’s integrated into that. And you can’t separate the two.”

Last week, a librarian in Davis, California, shut down a forum on “fair and safe sport for girls” over “misgendering” after a speaker referred to male-born athletes who identify as women as “men.”

Brave Books drew national attention to the issue last year by launching Mr. Cameron's library tour in response to drag queen story hours at libraries. The publisher said it asked more than 50 libraries that host drag queens to sponsor readings by Mr. Cameron, but none accepted.

Brave Books instead has rented out meeting rooms at libraries for the Cameron events, which typically draw overflow crowds.

In June, the association was accused of viewpoint discrimination for offering pointers on how to thwart the "See You at the Library" event hosted Aug. 5 by Brave Books.

Sen. Marco Rubio, Florida Republican, spearheaded a letter last month calling for the Institute of Museum and Library Services to investigate. He said the American Library Association is "actively discriminating against Brave Books on account of their faith and is likely doing so with taxpayer funds."

Mr. Rubio, joined by Republican Sens. Mike Braun of Indiana and Kevin Cramer of North Dakota, also called on the institute to halt all federal funding to the association pending the outcome of an investigation.

"The ALA should not be eligible to receive federal funding should an investigation find that the ALA violated the First Amendment rights of Americans," the July 28 letter said.

The American Library Association has not commented publicly on the Senate letter or the foundation report. The Washington Times has reached out to the association for a response.

Mr. Cameron said "See You at the Library" was a success despite the association's tips, which included tightening rules on meeting rooms and scheduling conflicting events to prevent his fans from renting public rooms for a national book reading.

He said the event was held in more than 300 public libraries across 46 states.

"The American Library Association's resounding encouragement to librarians to sabotage our 'See You at the Library Day' was no surprise, being that their president is a self-described Marxist," Mr. Cameron told The Times. "This only added fuel to our fire."