

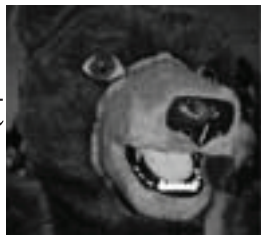


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# THE WY-NEWS

Roosevelt High School

<http://rhs.wyandotte.org/wynews>

Wyandotte, Michigan

## The Bookseller of Kabul stirs up controversy

BY MOLLY GUCKIAN

Parents and Board of Education members have expressed concern over whether award winning journalist, Asne Seierstad's international best seller *The Bookseller of Kabul*, which was read

last October by juniors in Honors English 11, is appropriate for high school students.

Tuesday, December 16, the School Board ordered a removal of the book from RHS to Superintendent Dr. Patricia Cole's office, until a

committee can be formed to evaluate this book and other school reading materials.

Seierstad's nonfiction book gives readers a first-hand view of the conditions and lifestyles of suppressed Afghan females, who are, in that culture, considered inferior to males.

Libby Hall, a concerned parent, first made it known at the November 18 Board of Education meeting, that there were two passages in the book which she considered inappropriate for eleventh grade students.

"It disheartens me that they [the students] go into the classroom in the public school in the community I live in, and they are taught pornography from a book," Hall stated at the November Board of Education meeting. Hall is referring to two passages in *The Bookseller of Kabul* which contain sexually explicit material, dealing with a man choosing not to take part in a rape, and another involving immorality.

Even though *The Bookseller of Kabul* has been challenged, some staff members believe that it is a significant literary piece and teaches students about Afghanistan's culture.

Roosevelt High School Principal Mary McFarlane believes that it is important that students understand about different cultures.

"I think that [the book] is an accounting of life in Afghanistan and I think it is imperative our students understand various issues in various cultures of the world," McFarlane said.

However, McFarlane believes that it is important to respect parents' and students' rights to come forth and voice their concerns.

"It is important to keep in mind that when someone raises an issue about anything, it's their right to do that. We have to respect that someone did have an issue, and we'll work with them to resolve an issue," McFarlane said.

At the December meeting, Annette Haley, Roosevelt High School's librarian and book club adviser, expressed that staff's decision to read this book, like every other book, was not taken lightly.

"In every case for every purchase there is a detailed, specific, and formal process for selecting appropriate materials for our students," Haley said, explaining how involved every book choice is.

Four juniors from the Honors English 11 class that read the book spoke at the December Board meeting in support of reading it.

However controversial *The Bookseller of Kabul* may be, Honors English 11 student Charlotte Sarnacki, who, along with three of her classmates, spoke up at the December Board meeting, said she enjoyed the book and also learned from it.

"It was a very challenging book," Sarnacki said. "It was very eye opening and taught us about how different lifestyles and cultures are in countries that are so completely different from what we're

used to. I definitely learned something from this book."

Honors English 11 teacher, Sean Soules, stated that present day students should be aware of the issue that presents itself in the book.

"The book explores a world where women are objectified on a daily basis and the theme of people following a system blindly. As 21<sup>st</sup> century learners, these are issues that all students should be aware of," Soules stated.

The two passages which were considered inappropriate contain sexually explicit scenes, the first dealing with bestiality and the second with the rape of women.

Hall explained that she understands that high school students are mature, and are able to handle mature literature, but believes boundaries need to be set.

"I know there is a feeling that high school students are mature and require mature reading and I agree, and yet I also believe that they need boundaries and if we don't set those boundaries, who will?" Hall said.

Sarnacki believes that if the passages are taken out of context the material may seem inappropriate. She also explains that the discussions in class were not focused on the two questionable passages.

However, Board of Education President Robert Kirby stated at the December meeting that he has received calls of distress from concerned parents and citizens. Also, at the December meeting, Kirby stated his opinion of the book.

"I actually read that book and I know how I feel, that book should not be in our Public Schools," Kirby said. "I don't think it should have been approved to begin with."

Kirby, the concerned parent, and some other Board members wanted the book removed and there was even talk of donating or destroying the books, but there was a compromise. At the end of December's meeting, it was decided that the books would be neither destroyed nor donated, but rather boxed up and stored at Cole's office until further action is decided.

But because a problem came up, Board of Education Trustee Kathy Bedikian believes a review process should be made to avoid similar issues in the future. If a committee views future books that are called to question, they will be able to decide whether books are appropriate for students or not.

"We are lacking a mechanism for something that needs to be reviewed in more depth," Bedikian said. "You obviously cannot get rid of every book that has questionable passages, but you have to balance each side. Will the book educate more, or will it just offend people, and that's why we need some kind of mechanism that will prevent this type of problem in the future."



Asne Seierstad's international best seller *The Bookseller of Kabul* was removed from RHS at the December 16 Board of Education meeting. At the meeting three teachers and four students stood up to speak against the ban.

## Marching Chief name brings media sandstorm

BY SHAWN LYNCH

As many people know there has been a sandstorm of publicity involving the marching band just days before they are scheduled to attend the inaugural parade for president-elect Barack Obama.

"We got a complaint from a group called the Religious Americans against the 'Indian' Nicknames & Logos stating that they suggest highly that we change the mascot of the marching band because they felt it disrespected the Indian tribe," said Principal Mary McFarlane.

After McFarlane received the 26-page letter from the group on December 18, the story was made public in the Detroit Free Press on Thursday, January 8. Since then McFarlane has gotten countless emails and phone calls in support of the Marching Chiefs name.

"I love and am proud of the number of individuals both in and out of school that have made comments about this and are willing to support us and keep this name. That just shows loyalty and respect for the marching band," McFarlane said.

She has received emails from alumni from all over the country, ranging from people still living in Wyandotte to deployed United States Navy who read the story on CNN.com. She has also received letters from people in Massachusetts and Florida. This controversy has been featured on many news networks such as CNN, WDIV, and WJBK. Interviews have also been broadcasted on WJR and *Mojo in the Morning* on Channel 95.5.

"I have not been able to read all the emails that I received because there have been so many and I feel great with all the support that we were

given," McFarlane said.

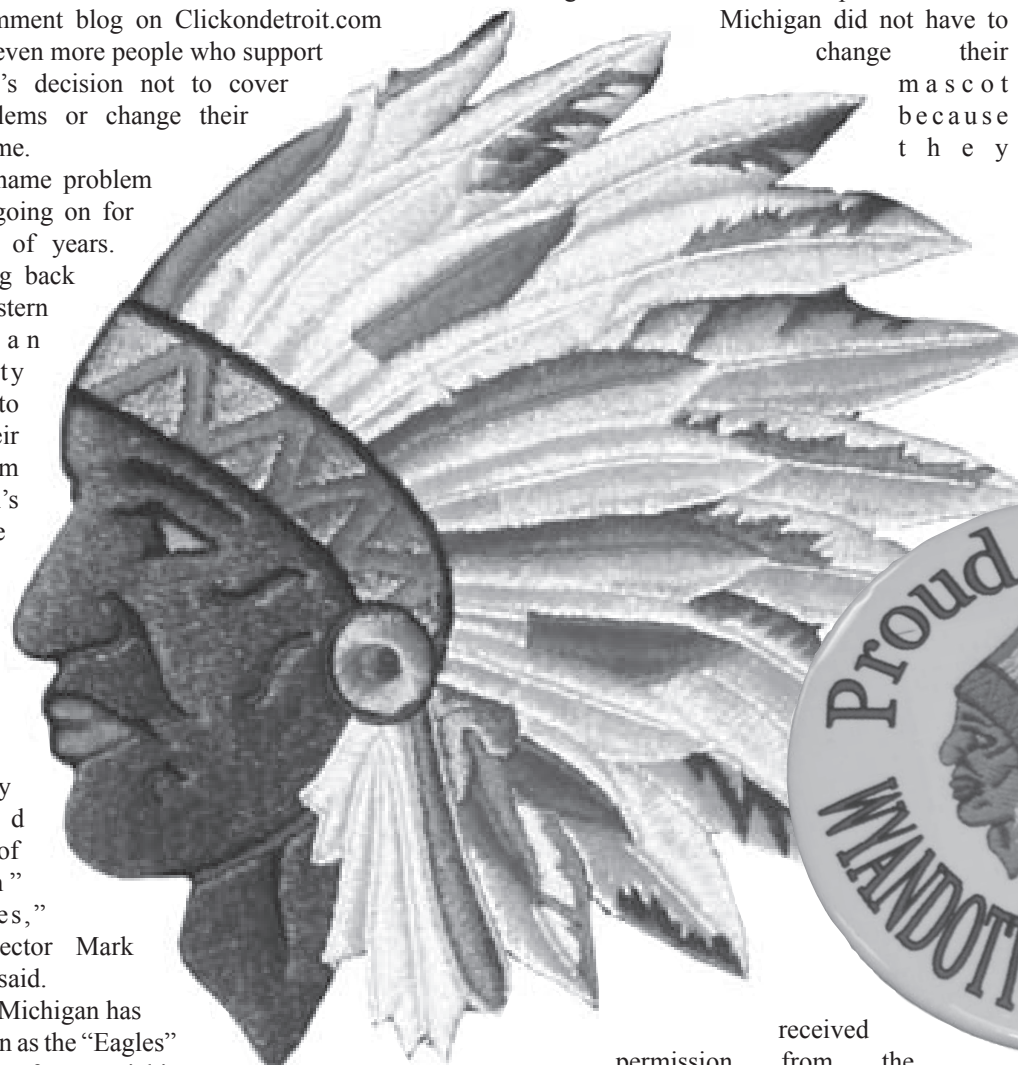
A comment blog on Clickondetroit.com displayed even more people who support Wyandotte's decision not to cover their emblems or change their mascot name.

"The name problem has been going on for a number of years. Even going back to Eastern Michigan University having to change their names from the Huron's to the Eagles now. There has always been

controversy around the use of "Indian" nicknames," Band Director Mark D'Angelo said.

Eastern Michigan has been known as the "Eagles" since 1991 after a Michigan Department of Civil Rights report issued in 1988 suggested that all schools using

logos like Indian tribes drop them. Central Michigan did not have to change their mascot because they



received permission from the Chippewa tribe. "After talking about the issue with Dr. Cole and

Mrs. McFarlane we decided that we needed to stand up for [the chief name] and it was an important thing that the marching band not only represents Roosevelt High School but also the Wyandotte Community as well," D'Angelo said.

Wyandotte was first called a chief in 1958 when it seemed that every other city around had their own logo so Wyandotte chose the "Chief" logo. In 1960 *WY-Hi* yearbook showed off the drumheads after the Majorettes were given "War Bonnets" to wear. This is how Wyandotte became the "Marching Chiefs."

"We do want to stand up for who we are and our heritage," sophomore Rachel Nicholson said. "It has been our Wyandotte heritage for over 50 years and has been like that since band sweetheart came around. It's part of our history."

The number of people who are proud of how the administration has responded is endless. In fact, the Chief of the Wyandotte Nation in Oklahoma sent a letter to the Religious Americans against the 'Indian' Nicknames & Logos leader stating that he could not understand what the big uproar is about. He also included that he "speaks to him personally" and told him to "mind his own business."