



SEPTEMBER 28,2023 SUBMISSION

Request for School Board Reconsideration of Library Media Materials

Author: Ashley Hope Perez

Title: Out of Darkness

Publisher: Carolrhoda Lab ®; Illustrated edition (September 1, 2015)

Request initiated by: (September 28, 2023)

Telephone:

Address:

City:

Zip:

1. To what in the book/material do you object: (Please be specific; cite pages, frames of films, dialogues, etc.)?

See attached references.

2. Where did you first learn of this item?

I first heard about this book when I was doing research about issues in the Manatee County schools. I was looking for opportunities to help improve the school culture and academics. I reviewed a number of the books that were on the lists of books being banned by school districts throughout Florida and in other states. I was horrified to see the inappropriate materials that are being made available to students – **our** students.

I decided to become involved with the School Board Elections as a starting point. The candidates in the 2022 Manatee County School Board Elections had platforms that promised to address some of these shortcomings. I also attended some meetings with the Media Committee as they were grappling with the legislative changes that were being made in Florida, waiting for guidance on how to address challenges of some of the books that we had flagged. At these meetings I found out that materials in the Library are violating Florida Law with regard to the protection of the students from pornographic sexual materials. In addition, I take issue with books that promote immorality, drug abuse, sexual confusion, suicide, anti-America sentiments, racism, activism etc.

I am not challenging the freedom to read but wish to ensure that young people not be subject to topics that are not appropriate for their level of maturity or mental health. Public libraries and book stores are available for adults to access whatever materials that they may choose. Our schools should take the high road when it comes to our young people.

Oh -- Just a reminder, the district policy:

- Require book selections to be free of pornography and prohibited materials harmful to minors, suited to student needs, and appropriate for the grade level and age group;
- Require consultation of reputable, professionally recognized sources and school community stakeholders for each selection;
- Provide for library media center collections based on reader interest, support of state academic standards and aligned curriculum, and the academic needs of students and faculty; and
- Provide for the regular removal or discontinuance of books based on factors specified in the bill, including those removed because of an objection by a parent or resident of the county.

Have you read the book in its entirety?

No, the excerpts (see attached) were horrible and so I found a summary to fully understand the story:

SUMMARY

Naomi, the main character, is sexually abused by her stepfather, Henry, as a child and continues after her mother's death.

The church pastor encourages her stepfather to marry Naomi before she has even finished school.

A gas explosion happens at the local school and her little sister is killed—graphic descriptions of her body parts all over. The dead sister's twin brother lies with her body until they can bury her.

Many of the teen and adult characters masturbate.

1. *multiple, comprehensive-enough instructions on giving "hand jobs" (adult males training teen girls);*
2. *female masturbation (protagonist) justified for pain relief and mental escape by a girl living through the trauma of being sexually abused by a stepfather;*
3. *male masturbation by both the stepdad (villain) and love interest (hero);*

The main character has graphic sexual activity with her boyfriend, Wash. She is Hispanic, he is black and this relationship is "unwelcome" for 1930's.

At the end of the book, Henry discovers the relationship. He forces Naomi's little brother to tie the boyfriend, Wash, to a tree. Henry violently rapes his underage daughter in front of

his son (her brother) and Wash who is tied to the tree. Henry beats the daughter while raping her then coerces the son to shoot Wash. Son hesitates. Henry shoots his daughter in the leg then beats Wash until he falls on top of Naomi. He shoots Wash and the bullet goes through both of them. Son shoots father in the head—book describes pieces of his head hitting the tree behind him.

** Credits to Common Sense Media for partial summary and extended parental reviews as well as 'LISD Parents for Academic-Focused Curriculum'.*

3. Is there any additional information you would like us to consider in our evaluation? The book is vulgar and contains graphic sex, violence, rape, bigotry and foul language. It would seem that point of the book is to make the students feel the pain of the characters but I think that it goes too far and should be restricted to adults. The book is in five of the High Schools as well as a Middle School.

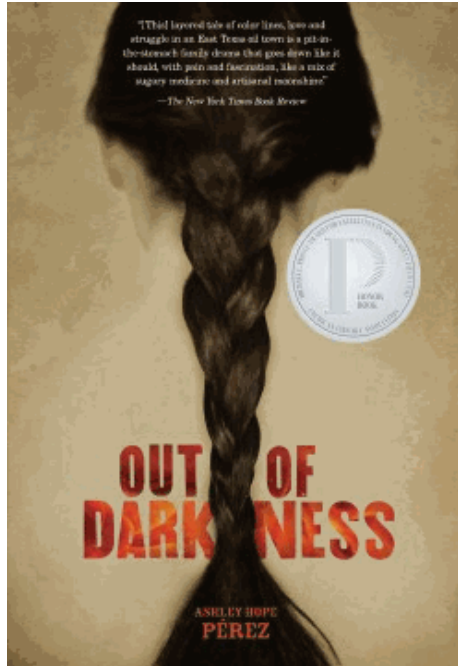
4. What would you like the final outcome to be for this library media item or items?

1. Remove from all Manatee School District Schools and Media Centers and disallow future purchases— see below

Bay Shore High School
Braden River High School
Lakewood Ranch High School
Manatee High School
Southeast High School Media Center
Dr Mona Jain Middle School

February 15, 2023

OUT OF DARKNESS



Young Adult

By Ashley Hope Pérez

ISBN: 978-1-46777-678-3

Summary of Concerns:

This book contains controversial racial commentary; derogatory terms and mild profanity; violence; explicit sexual nudity and explicit sexual activities including sexual assault and battery of a minor.



3 /5

Minor Restricted
BookLooks Review Rating

Page 32

For the boys, pussy or the idea of pussy o the idea of the idea of pussy.

Page 54

Better was big enough to include Rosie Lynn Horton, who sang soprano in the choir and had slightly mismatched nipples on nutmeg brown breasts that were otherwise perfect.

Page 67

She was there when Henry came into the bathroom and closed the door behind him. She watched as he placed both hands on the wall beneath the mirror and pressed his forehead against the glass. A moment later, one of his hands slid down into his pajamas. It was like some small creature was trying to escape from his throat. His hand moved fast. His boddy jiggled. He kept his forehead against the mirror and his eyes closed. Then he grunted once and seemed to shudder all over.

Page 68

He took one of her hands in his and squeezed it. "Come on over here." He pulled her to her feet, close to him.

He shifted in his pajamas, and the part of him that made him a man stuck out, reddish purple and frightening. She had never seen one before except on a baby.

This was different.

He lifted her hand to his mouth and licked it. Then he lowered her hand down and closed it around the hardness his hand moved hers. His left hand gripped her shoulder, pressing her head tight against the hard, flat plane of his stomach. She watched her hand move back and forth like it didn't belong to her. ...A moment later, the thing leaped. Henry's whole body shuddered, and a hot mess lay across her palm and between her fingers.

Page 103

"Maybe a little retarded. A lot of those Mexicans are."

Page 133

"You've been feeding us nigger food?..."

"...Don't you go back to that nigger store, hear me?"

Page 159

He tried to pretend that he wasn't thinking about falling against her, falling into what he had wanted and tried to forget that he wanted, this hunger that was different from other hungers before. He wanted the feel of her hips, her mouth, the sweet hollow of her neck. His muscles tightened with the effort of not taking her braid in his hand. Of not working his way down the row of buttons on her dress. Of not touching her everywhere.

"I want-" he managed.

"Me too." She took a small step toward him and placed his hand on her waist. She slid her arms inside his jacket and pressed herself to him. His shirt buttons were cold against her cheek, but she could feel the fierce beating of his heart and the warmth of his skin. She moved her hands up his stomach and chest and over his shoulders. She pushed off his jacket. She took his arm and traced a vein from his wrist to his elbow and slid a finger under his rolled-up shirtsleeve.

Page 171

"I love it." She walked her fingers up the back of his neck.

He undid the bit of string that held her braid and slid his fingers through the silky strands until it fell down over her shoulders. "So beautiful," he whispered. She trembled, letting her hands fall to his arms. Her back arched a little as his fingers climbed the front of her dress. He touched each button carefully between thumb and forefinger, starting at her waist. "What's here?" he asked, tracing a slight bulge between her breasts.

Naomi blushed for the first time inside the tree. "Something for you," she said. "Hold on." She turned away, meaning to get it out herself. Suddenly the game she had planned seemed crude, not sweet and playful as she'd imagined it.

"Wait." He twined his fingers through hers and leaned close. His breath was warm on her neck, and she could almost feel his lips. "Did you hide something for me to find?"

"Yes, but..." She hid her face. "I can't... Now I feel..."

..."I'm fast, then?" she blurted out.

"No," he said, "you are bold, and I love it. I love it about you, Naomi. Do you hear me?" He tilted her face toward him.

...He undid the buttons of her dress until he could slide a hand inside the top of her slip. There was a small roll of fabric nestled warm and tight there. He leaned over her and tugged it free with his teeth. When he had it, she could feel him smiling mischief at her. "What do you say I save this and keep looking to see what other treasures I can find?" He nuzzled her neck and kissed her behind the ear.

Page 190

God, how he had wanted her.

Page 196

A moment later he was behind her. Naomi's whole body stiffened. A rough hand gathered her hair and pushed it to one side. His face nuzzled her neck. He smelled of grease and dirt, liquor and cigarettes.

...She tried to wriggle free, but his arms circled her waist and tightened like an iron band around her rib cage.

"Stell, baby," he whispered. "Let's dance." A thumb slid up the side of her breast.

"Stop it!" Naomi hissed.

..."Christ, I've missed this," Henry murmured. "It's been so long." He slotted one of his legs between hers and pressed himself in closer. She closed her eyes tight and thought of her tree, thought of Wash, thought of the river. She prayed that when she opened her eyes, she would be there.

It didn't work.

"Stell-"

"I'm Naomi!" she said, wrenching herself around to face him. She was still locked in his arms, and now his face was inches from hers. She felt the hardness of him against her hip, and the sour-sweet smell of whiskey filled her nostrils as he breathed onto her face.

"Stop it!" she said, leaning back as far as she could.

..."Come on, now," he said, pressing his hips against her.

She worked an elbow up and jabbed it into his chest.

Henry laughed. "Oh, honey, go on and be mad, that makes you look even more like your ma. She liked to pretend to fight, too."

"So you know who I am, then. Behave yourself for heaven's sake!"

"You like playin' mama, don't you? I can help you play all night if you want." He grinned at her as if none of her resistance had registered. "God, I'd like to give it to you just like this-" He lowered his hands to her

bottom and rubbed himself against her.
"That's enough, Henry!" Naomi gave him a shove, but he didn't budge.
He smile widened. "Say it again."

Page 210

Once Henry was sure Naomi and the twins were gone, he came out of his bedroom and locked himself into the bathroom. He braced himself against the sink and held Naomi's slip up to his nostrils. He breathed in the smell of her and set to work on himself. It wouldn't be like this for much longer, but he had to manage until everything fell into place.
Sometimes he began thinking of Estella or othe plump redhead he'd frequented out at the Chicken Ranch before he got saved. But it was the same as every time since Naomi had come to live in his house: he needed to imagine her to finish. The sooner he finished, the sooner he could pretend he hadn't done it.

He closed his eyes, bunched the thin fabric in his hand, and pressed it back up to his nose. After he washed his hands, he shoved the slip back into her drawer and closed himself into his room to sleep.

Page 220

They did not waste time; there was never enough. She leaned hard against him, liking the shape of his body against hers. He kissed her and started working his hand under her slip, sliding her dress up to her thighs.

...She bit his lip, then kissed him hard and deep.

...A gift he wanted to give her, his beautiful, bold Naomi. He moved his lips away from her mouth, kissed his way down her neck, and worked his way lower, lower.

Before he touched her, before he slipped his hand back up under her dress, before he tugged her drawers and stockings down gently, so gently, before he knelt in front of her, before any of this, Naomi knew that she wanted it. Because it was Wash.

...His hands opened her thighs, and then he was touching her with his mouth, kissing warmth, wetness.
..."Please," she said, pressing her back against the inside of the tree and holding tight to his shoulders.
"Please, please, please, oh." Then she was laughing and sighing and amazed at him and amazed at herself.

A moment later, she felt her usual size again, and the feeling of easy improvisation was gone. She moved her hand tentatively toward his belt. "Do you want me to...?"

He took her hand and squeezed it. "It makes me feel good to make you feel good."

"But..." She bit her lip. She did not want him to be outside all the pleasure.

"There's always tomorrow," he said.

"I certainly hope so," she said. "Tomorrow, then." She kissed him and tucked herself against him and felt how much he wanted her.

Page 228

"Tell me you didn't just piss yourself."

"I didn't..." Beto stared down to see urine running down his leg and pooling in his shoes. "Then why are your goddamn britches wet?" he roared. "You're some boy, sissier than your sister. Too much time around women, it's turnin' you queer."

...Henry shook his head. "Come here, you little shit." He tossed the dove against a tree and stared at his son.

Beto ignored his father and ran toward the bird, though he knew it was too late. He stooped down to see the dove, but Henry grabbed him by the collar. "Hold on, there, partner," he snarled. He shoved the

shotgun back into Beto's hands. "Fire on that," he said, jutting his chin toward the bird. "Do it now. It can't get away from you, so you'd better hit it."

"Kid's upset, Henry, don't you think?"

"...Don't be makin' excuses for him. We're six beers in and we're still shootin' straight and keepin' our pants dry."

...Henry pressed down on his finger, and the gun fired.

For an instant, the bird came back to life. It leaped with the shot and then landed, bloodier than before, on the forest floor.

Tears flooded Beto. Snot poured down his face.

What had the hunting been about? Making a man of Beto. And if Henry couldn't make Beto into a proper son, maybe he was thinking he'd try his luck at making one inside of her.

Page 230

When Beto had gone into the bathroom, Naomi turned around and found Henry standing uncomfortably close to her. He didn't meet her eyes but snaked an arm around her waist. "You look pretty," he murmured.

Page 233

Now Henry watched Naomi as she took the laundry down from the line, admiring how her body moved under the thin yellow dress, the dress she'd made from his Christmas gift. He could watch her all day, that stretch and bend, stretch and bend. The movements made her dress love on the parts of her that he, too, wanted to touch.

Page 241

...Naomi was a nigger-loving hussy.

Page 249

"Let's practice not saying anything at all," se whispered. And she began to kiss him slowly, sliding her hands down to his waistband.

Page 303

"I sure wouldn't a let no nigger touch my daughter's body."

Page 350

"Black as a nigger's nipple!"...

Page 358

..."but I heard from my preacher that God meant blackness as a curse for the Tribe of Ham. Which I took to say, God don't like niggers, neither." He resettled the rope on his shoulders and cracked his knuckles.

Page 363

But she know what she saw when she looked up into the branches and among the waxy dark leaves and the enormous buds like closed white fists.

Even through her tears, she knew what she saw. Two dark forms, swaying. Hung.

Father like son.

Page 376

The air smelled of iodine and hair oil and filth. Blackness.

...There was movement in the care, and then he was face to face with the nigger boy who should have been swinging from a tree.

...Now he could see that the rest of the nigger family was there, black hands lifted into blackness.

Page 377

"You nigger-loving cunt," he said.

Page 378

"A nigger, Naomi?"

..."You take up with this nigger all the while you was being cold to me?..."

...He dropped his hunting pack to the ground but kept his shotgun slung across his back. "Now, nigger, you walk real slow over to that big oak. That's right, walk on over." Naomi and Beto followed after Wash.

Page 380

"Look at me, son," he said to Beto. "Now I'm going to show you another side of what it means to be a man. What do you do with a field of your own? You plow it." He walked over to Naomi. "Lie down," he told her.

"Don't do this, Henry." Naomi's lip trembled as she spoke.

She dropped to her knees.

..."Lie back. Open your legs. Stop crying. Don't try to tell me this is the first time you've done this," Henry said.

"Henry," she protested, "I haven't- I've never--"

"You've lied enough already," he said. Then he pushed her back until her head was on the ground. "Beto, you come here. Watch. But don't try anything. I've got the gun right here." Beto looked long enough to see the revolver his father held near his sister's face. The shotgun lay on the far side of Naomi, out of reach.

Beto did not watch. But he heard.

Naomi's pleas. Wash's shouts. The sound of him pulling at the ropes. Henry's fist slamming into his sister's face once, twice, three times. Henry shouting, "You like that? Keep it up, boy! Every time you holler, I'm gonna punch her again."

Wash's silence. The rustle of dry leaves. His father's rapid breathing. An agony of waiting. His sister crying out in pain. And then the end of it. Henry's shudder, grunt, and gasp. Naomi's sobbing.

When Beto could look, Henry was standing up and zipping his pants with one hand. "I'll be damned, girl," he said, pushing his hair back off his brow. "You were telling the truth--"

"Stop this!" Wash shouted, still straining at the ropes.

"You haven't had enough yet, huh?" Henry said. "I'll be getting back to you in a minute." He scooped up the shotgun and jammed the revolver into his waistband.

...Henry paused when he was facing Naomi again. Blood oozed from her lips. He left eye was swollen closed. The front of her dress was damp and smeared with blood. There were swaths of red on her arms where he had held her down. She tried to cover herself with the torn fabric of her dress.

...Then Henry crossed to where Wash was. He hit Wash again and again. He kicked him. He pummeled and jabbed and slapped. If Naomi cried out, he hit Wash harder. He used the end of the shotgun like a baseball bat. He did not stop until the only thing holding Wash up was the rope that tied him to the tree.

"I think that's enough for now," Henry said. "Robbie, go untie him. I want to see him on his knees."

...When Beto undid the last knot, Wash tumbled to the ground and fell on his face.

"Here's your chance to redeem yourself," Henry said to Beto. "I'm going to give you this," he stretched

out the hand that was holding the shotgun, “and I’m going to hold on to this.” He pulled the revolver out of the waistband of his pants.

Wash pushed himself up on all fours. He coughed up blood and something white.

Teeth, Beto realized.

Wash crawled slowly toward Naomi.

“You remember what I showed you when we went out to the woods?” Henry pressed the butt of the gun into Beto’s shoulder. “If you need more shots, remember to pump it. Go on now. Aim at him. He ain’t moving fast.”

...”Good boy,” Henry said. “Now shoot him, or I’ll shoot your sister.”

...”I ain’t playing, boy,” Henry lifted the revolver and pointed it at Naomi.

...Henry took a step toward Naomi, the gun pointed at her. “One...two...three...I ain’t counting past seven, son.”

“Please,” Naomi gurgled. “Please don’t-“

“Four...five...six...”

A shot rang out. Wash moaned. Naomi’s eyes widened in disbelief. Beto gasped at what he’d made happen.

...Henry stared down at the gun in his hand. He hadn’t known until the moment he fired that he was capable of shooting a woman. Red seeped from Naomi’s thigh.

...”Tell Robbie to kill the nigger,” he said to her.

...Naomi could not move. She watched the sky over Wash’s should with the eye that was not swollen shut. It was the same view she’d seen when Henry held her down. She had wanted it to stop. The pain. She had thought, Henry is putting himself inside me. She had vomited a little, and bile had dribbled down the side of her mouth.

...the were far enough into their dream that neither of them heard the next shot.

...The patch of red on Naomi’s chest matched the one on Wash’s back.

Profanity Count

Ass 1 Bitch 1 Cunt 1 Nigger 12 Piss 1 Pussy 3 Shit 6