

Read Me My Rights!

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I usually watch television so that I might feel like a mindless idiot. Let's face it, while Brandon, Dylan, Kelly and the rest of the California Zip Code Crew are pitifully cute, they, and their capers, are terribly stupid. I think I'm on firm ground when I say that you don't have to be a brain surgeon to watch TV. You can imagine my shock, then, when I was jolted out of my vegetative state at the words, "She wants to ban books, now?" I wiped the drool off of my chin and realized I was watching a drama called "Picket Fences." In this particular episode, the Sheriff's son was shot by another little boy in a school hallway. The mayor becomes a Nazi, defying the Bill of Rights left and right. The Sheriff mutinies, is fired, but eventually saves the fictional Rome, Wisconsin from becoming a "police state." Although the drama itself was trite and predictable, the issues it addressed were (gasp) thought-provoking.

For example, the mayor banned the ownership of firearms in her township. Could this concept be applied to the nation? It certainly seems like a plausible solution to our nation's staggering murder rate. If there were no guns, they couldn't kill people, right? Actually, I think there is a danger here in placing blame on an inanimate object. You can't point a gun at someone and say, "Okay, Gun, kill him, you evil evil thing!" You have to pull the trigger. People kill people with guns; guns do not kill. I ask you, what will be solved by banning guns? Mr. Criminal isn't going to say, "Well, golly, I can't shoot Mr. Other Criminal now, because guns are illegal." There are already enough guns in circulation to last a long, long time, even if manufacturers shut down tomorrow. I personally cherish my right to own a firearm. If some stranger skulls at 3:00 in the morning uninvited, I doubt he is there to chat. And he won't leave standing up.

In the drama, the mayor also demanded control of the local cable company. She, and two others, wanted to choose what the cable company aired to its viewing population. Who could profess to have this right? You may ban movies like Aliens, in which a mere female takes on an entire nest of man-eating aliens, shooting and cursing all the while. But you would also have to ban movies like King of Kings, in which an innocent man is mutilated, publicly humiliated, and then nailed to a cross to die. Who among you may judge? I know I wouldn't want to pay thirty dollars a month to watch reruns of "Gilligan's Island" and "The Andy Griffith Show."

Another scenario posed in the show was setting up roadblocks to monitor the comings and goings of the townspeople. This scene reminds me of a story a friend once told me. She was living in

Germany in the Pre-Fallen Wall Era. One day, she decided to take her family on a harmless shopping trip into East Germany. Need I continue?

The mayor, in the episode, also wanted to fingerprint every citizen in the town. It was pointed out by one of the characters that having all those prints on file would save money and hours in investigative work. However, my hero, the Sherriff, pointed out that not every one deserved to be fingerprinted.

*"In my opinion, mandatory fingerprinting
of every citizen like a common criminal
smacks of 'Guilty until proven innocent.' The
last time I checked, that's not what our
Constitution read."*

Perhaps the most heinous crime of all, committed by the fictional mayor, was her attempt ban books from the school library. The country is illiterate enough. Banning books like Catcher in the Rye, Of Mice and Men, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, and Are You There, God? It's Me, Margaret will not decrease violence and sex. It will decrease literacy and a child's ability to think. The sad part is that the real-life counterparts of the fictional mayor in the episode of "Picket Fences" have gone much further than banning these few classics. So, why did the mayor stop with these books? She could have banned many more! Ban Moby Dick because the title alone is provocative! Ban Alice in Wonderland because she uses drugs! (Author's note: *Alice's adventures aren't exactly made for children, but if your child is perceptive enough to pick up on all the implications in the text, he or she shouldn't be reading children's literature, anyway.*) Ban all works by Shakespeare because he was a dirty old man! Ban the Beowulf because it's violent! Ban Charlotte's Web because everyone knows that animals can't talk, and besides, the main character dies! Ban Crime and Punishment because Dostoyevsky was warped and twisted! Ban everything by Hemingway because he was an alcoholic! Ban all the King Arthur tales because Merlin was a magician, and magicians are evil! Ban encyclopedias because little girls use them to find out about sexuality! Ban dictionaries because little boys huddle

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