

# Anaya, Rudolfo - "Bless Me Ultima" - Censorship - Banned Books

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## Superintendent bans "Bless Me, Ultima" in Colorado high school

(73 comments; last comment posted February 10, 2005 09:34 am)

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Associated Press  
February 3, 2005

NORWOOD, Colo. - The superintendent of schools has banned Rudolfo Anaya's acclaimed book "Bless Me, Ultima" at Norwood High School, saying it is too profane for the 96 students there.

Superintendent Bob Conder said some parents were offended by obscene language and paganistic practices in the 1972 coming-of-age novel about a 7-year-old boy and his life with his Roman Catholic mother, Luna, and Ultima, who uses herbs and magic to heal.

"It's less a matter of censorship than a matter of sponsorship. That's not the kind of garbage I want to sponsor at this high school," Conder said Wednesday.

Conder \_ who hasn't read the entire book \_ gave more than two dozen "Bless Me, Ultima" copies to a parent to destroy. The teacher who ordered the book has apologized in a letter to parents and won't be disciplined, he said.

Conder has not pulled any other book from classrooms during his six years as superintendent.

He said just one parent in the eastern Colorado community has complained, but Norwood Post editor Margo Roberts said she has been inundated by messages from people angry about Conder's action.

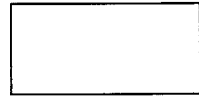
Norwood High School junior Christian Skyler Kelley wrote a letter to the editor criticizing Conder.

"I never knew this book existed," Kelley said. "Now I feel it is my obligation to read it and see what our superintendent found so dangerous that it must be destroyed."

Anaya, widely considered the founder of modern Chicano literature and a professor emeritus of English at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque, said he wasn't surprised parents and educators who haven't read the book would be frightened by its harsh language.

"My suggestion is: Read the book. The language is not gratuitous. It fits with the scenes," said Anaya, 67. "I have hundreds of letters from students from all over the country who have been moved by this book. I would love to go to Norwood with my box full of letters."

Other Colorado communities have embraced "Bless Me, Ultima." The book is part of the English curriculum at Montrose High School and has been chosen for community reading programs in Boulder and Mesa County.



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## Comments

**By Rachel Alarid** (Submitted: 02/10/2005 9:34 am )

The oldest house is next door to the San Miguel Chapel, both are owned by Christian Brothers.

RC-

What I remember about the herb shop were all those flavors of candy cane like candy.

It is said that two sisters (brujas) lived in that house, and after one of their spells went wrong, or they were accused of using their powers for evil the towns people apparently beheaded them. They say at night you can hear a head rolling down the hallway, while others say you can see one of the sisters walking in front of the house.

With that and La Llorona, its a wonder that I even go downtown after sundown.

**By Maria Leyba** (Submitted: 02/09/2005 4:48 pm )

Is that oldest house by the Cathedral? I think I have been there.

**By RC ChBvez** (Submitted: 02/09/2005 4:08 pm )

I remember that herb shop Rachel. It was by the Chinese restaurant, huh? I remember an extremely knowledgeable lady working there that knew everything and gave instructions, even if you weren't there to buy.

Please post and share the Brujas Oldest House story under the History thread for us all (me) to know. Thanks.

**By Rachel Alarid** (Submitted: 02/09/2005 3:17 pm )

Like Joey, I never took Bless Me, Ultima to not be more than a fictional story made up with very real cultural facts. Does that make sense. I remember going to the Herb Shop near the Plaza

(gosh he must have been 100 when I was a child)and having my Dad buy herbs that his own Grandparents used to make teas when he was a child. Heck how many of us went to Chimayo to put sand on our aliaments.

It is such a strange combination of families who were devout Catholics, but than there is this other side. Like how many remember the stories about the sisters Brujas who lived in what is now the Oldest House in the USA.

In the end Mr. Kiker is entitled to his opinion, but what is one man's trash is another man's treasure, and it is books like Bless Me, which keeps the stories alive, especially when you didn't listen as much as you should have to the stories your grandparents told you growing up.

**By Joey Martin** (Submitted: 02/09/2005 11:56 am )

Mr. Kiker is entitled to his opinion even though I believe his statement was more of an attempt to spark an argument and not because he felt he had anything of importance to say. If there is any question as to why "Bless Me, Ultima" is used in English classes you need not look any further than Mr. Kiker's use of the English language.

I will agree with Mr. Kiker that "Bless Me, Ultima" is a fictional story, I don't believe anyone is claiming that it is a true story. However, I also agree with Mr. Lopez because like I said in my first posting Ultima could have very easily been

my great-grandmother and Antonio's struggles between Christianity, his parents' expectations and his respect for Ultima's ways was my same struggle when I was a child. What fascinated me most about "Bless Me, Ultima" is that it reaffirmed some very real but often times unspoken components of Hispanic culture in Northern New Mexico. Before "Bless Me, Ultima" I remembered a lot of silly little superstitious stories, after "Bless Me, Ultima" I recognized some very real components of my family's history that made them who they were and make me who I am. I'm proud of these components and I am forever grateful to Prof. Anaya for putting it all down on paper for me to share with my children.

Thank you Prof. Anaya.

**By Judy Yelsky** (Submitted: 02/09/2005 11:15 am )

Hey Greg Kiker:

Where do you go to school? Your syntax, punctuation and spelling sucks.

**By Maria Leyba** (Submitted: 02/09/2005 10:52 am )

Mr. Kiker this book is not crap. And I believe you are unaware that this "fiction" is also very much in tune with the Chicano culture in our state. This book hits home for many of us. Your attitude reflects the same as the IGNORANT superintendent of that Colorado school.

**By Kaaren Boullosa** (Submitted: 02/09/2005 10:39 am )

Mr. Kiker, I have not read the title in question, but given your spelling and grammar, I'm reluctant to take your word on the quality of any text.

"Consider" not "conider" -

**This type of useless text or These types of useless texts** (please conform singular and plural forms).

**By David Lopez** (Submitted: 02/09/2005 10:10 am )

Greg, of course "Bless Me, Ultima" is fiction. However, I would not be surprised if all that occurred in this book really happened sometime, somewhere in Northern New Mexico.

What is most fascinating about this book is that many of us either had or knew a Grandma that rooted out medicinal herbs. As children we had friends that went to a different church than us and we considered them to be heathens, on and on.

**By Khalil Spencer** (Submitted: 02/09/2005 9:48 am )

Here goes the flame war...

**By greg kiker** (Submitted: 02/09/2005 9:32 am )

The book is crap. I read this past week for school. It does nothing to advance education. It is sad that this type of useless texts are considered educational. Forget the "bad words", it is fiction.

**By A Norwooder** (Submitted: 02/09/2005 8:07 am )

I think that forbidding the study of any book with "bad words" goes too far, and I think most other parents in our little town agree.

There must be other great works of literature that can't be studied here thanks to our Superintendent's policy.

If folks agree, and have examples of how other school districts handle the "bad words" issue, give us more feedback!

And, especially - write our Superintendent about this - he says he's had nothing but letters of support for his banning of the book (See Vicki Perry's post for his address).

Thanks, NM, for supporting us to improve our kid's education!

(from a frustrated Norwood parent)

**By Joey Martin** (Submitted: 02/08/2005 11:45 am )  
Itzcoatl Coyotlacatl,

I did not want to respond to your assessment of me being "brained washed" which would only distract from the topic at hand. Even though as American's our culture has, for the most part, been dominated by an Anglo-Saxon culture dose not mean that those of English decent were the only early "Americans" represented in American society. If I'm not mistaken, the debate over slavery almost ended our government before it was ever created. I believe that our nation's Declaration of Independence and our constitution were worded specifically to eventually incorporate a diversified population and to remain applicable to an ever changing society.

I prefer to live in an optimist world where people work together to improve their lives and their family's future, as oppose to living in a pessimistic world where our rage doesn't allow us to focus on the topic at hand or even recognize our allies. I don't know of any culture with a spotless past or any society that is all things to all people, as in "Bless me, Ultima", so therefore I go through life continuously learning and developing my own opinions while also realizing that I share this world with a lot of other people and we are all entitled to our own opinions. It's when we force our opinions on others that the problems begin. The opinions of Norwood, Colorado as a community were not respected and the fear of paganism by a few parents and one superintendent also cost the Norwood school district a return deposit on some books that could have been better used to purchase other educational materials.

**By Khalil Spencer** (Submitted: 02/07/2005 12:20 pm )

Awesome! Now there is a civics lesson, both for the student body and for the Superintendent. Thanks for the link, Rachel.

Now we find out that in addition to censoring books without reading them, Conder was not even aware of the BOE policies! Loose cannon?

**By Rachel Alarid** (Submitted: 02/07/2005 12:00 pm )  
<http://snipurl.com/ckcr>

Sorry Khaili, it was in the Rocky Mountain News.

**By Khalil Spencer** (Submitted: 02/07/2005 10:42 am )

Rachel, do you have a link on that story? I did not see it in today's Post.

**By Rachel Alarid** (Submitted: 02/07/2005 9:45 am )

*"We're going to get Ultima back," she said. "If we don't, we'll take it from here."* The Denver Post 2/7/05

15-20 students excersising their right to free speech staged a sit-in and took turns reading from Bless Me, Ultima. The superintendent has written a letter of apology and that he should not have pulled the books *without enough information on the content of the book, " without reading it himself and without reading the school board's policy regarding controversial issues.*

So what are the positives from the dust up in this small town? People throughout this nation were introduced to Professor Anaya, and the students of Norwood High School saw something that was not right and stood up for their first amendment rights.

**By Khalil Spencer** (Submitted: 02/05/2005 8:28 pm )

From the Denver Post:

"President Bush awarded Anaya the National Medal of Arts in 2002. First lady Laura Bush has listed "Bless Me, Ultima" as ninth on a list of 12 books that she highly recommends."

<http://www.denverpost.com/Stories/0,1413,36%257E53%257E2689296,00.html>

**By Khalil Spencer** (Submitted: 02/05/2005 7:23 pm )

For anyone still following this story, I strongly suggest you read this:

<http://www.rjgeib.com/thoughts/451/451.html>

"There is more than one way to burn a book.

And the world is full of people running about with lit matches."

by Ray Bradbury

a somewhat long excerpt:

" Two weeks ago my mountain of mail delivered forth a pipsqueak mouse of a letter from a well-known publishing house that wanted to reprint my story "The Fog Horn" in a high school reader.

In my story, I had described a lighthouse as having, late at night, an illumination coming from it that was a "God light." Looking up at it from the viewpoint of any sea-creature one would have felt that one was in "the Presence."

The editors had deleted "God-Light" and "in the Presence."

Some five years back, the editors of yet another anthology for school readers put together a volume with some 400 (count 'em) short stories in it. How do you cram 400 short stories by Twain, Irving, Poe, Maupassant and Bierce into one book?

Simplicity itself. Skin, debone, demarrow, scarify, melt, render down and destroy. Every adjective that counted, every verb that moved, every metaphor that weighed more than a mosquito - out! Every simile that would have made a sub-moron's mouth twitch - gone! Any aside that explained the two-bit philosophy of a first-rate writer - lost!

Every story, slenderized, starved, bluepenciled, leeches and bled white, resembled every other story. Twain read like Poe read like Shakespeare read like Dostoevsky read like - in the finale - Edgar Guest. Every word of more than three syllables had been razored. Every image that demanded so much as one instant's attention - shot dead.

Do you begin to get the damned and incredible picture? "

Yeah, go read this. Its the future...no, its the present, damn it all.

**By David Lopez** (Submitted: 02/05/2005 5:30 pm )

I think that Khalil said it all.

It was still nice to recognize the work of a man we hold in the highest esteem.

**By Khalil Spencer** (Submitted: 02/05/2005 3:00 pm )

Dear Ms. Roberts:

Thank you for the link and for publishing the original article in your newspaper.

I only speak for myself, but I never tried to bash the entire Norwood community; the students staging the sit-in are an excellent example of dissent with the book ban and destruction. I am sure many others find this distasteful as well.

My comments were directed at your School Superintendent (who not only pulled the books from his faculty and students, but allowed books to be burned), and the parents who did the deed. I find the symbolism of such actions horrible and reiterate that only fools would do such a thing given the historical symbolism of book-burning. For a Superintendent to claim he is trying to "protect the kids" while being complicit in a book-burning is rather ironic indeed.

I wish your community well.

Khal Spencer

Los Alamos, NM

**By Vicki Perry** (Submitted: 02/05/2005 1:44 pm )  
Norwood Public Schools

Director: Bob Condor

Aptdo. Postal (PO Box) # 448

Norwood, CO 81423

970-327-4336

Book burning in 2005? In a public school? Outrageous. Oh look I just happened to find Condor's contact info online.

Fax 970-327-4116

**By Margo Roberts** (Submitted: 02/05/2005 10:48 am )

I am glad to see that my original article has initiated so much feedback. But, I feel that some of your comments are just as uneducated as those that ban a book without reading it. You are judging an entire community based on the opinions of a small few. Albeit they made a decision that affected a great many of us, this is what catapulted our small town into the limelight. I think you should get to know the entire population before you make any snap judgements. That is just as ignorant as taking a few phrases from a book, ban it, then sentence it to destruction.

If you would like to follow up on the positive aspect of this story, find out what happens by going to <http://www.norwoodpost.com> on Wednesday, Feb. 9th. You will be pleased to read of the developments that came about from the mistakes of a few.

And remember, we do have our first amendment rights, everyone has the right to speak their opinion. Don't ever try to quash another's point of view, you may learn from it. As the book in question points out, not all of life's lessons are pleasant ones.

Margo L. Roberts

editor

Norwood Post

**By Khalil Spencer** (Submitted: 02/04/2005 1:55 pm )

Thanks for the link, Mr. Gunther. My optimism about the student's reaction to this is not unfounded.

**By Lisa Lujan** (Submitted: 02/04/2005 1:48 pm )

I think we've all been assigned this book as reading material in one class or another. And most of us have re-read it several times because it IS a great book by a great author. Guys, this is OUR culture represented by Anaya. What does this Super Conder know about our culture? My guess is nothing. But you're right Daniel, this guy just made a very popular book even more desirable!

**By Gloria Mendoza** (Submitted: 02/04/2005 1:18 pm )

If I would ever meet up with someone from Norwood, Colorado, knowing what I now know of their superintendent's discrimination, I will consider them "uneducated".

**By David Lopez** (Submitted: 02/04/2005 12:27 pm )

Web ed, if you do add the snipurl, please proof the link before we see it. I can just imagine the hijinks we could pull.

**By Roy Salazar** (Submitted: 02/04/2005 12:12 pm )

This guy ( Norwood School Superintendent ) might be a first class nut case, or he might be working for the Talibanies or for other suppressive government in our planet. Dang! Get him out of the school system and send him back to history classes 101.

**By Itzcoatl Coyotlacatl**(Submitted: 02/04/2005 12:01 pm )

David Gunter, I'll go go back and RE read Daniels contribution if you will quit posting the same thing over and over again. Take a look, you submitted the same post twice. Do we have a deal??

**By Itzcoatl Coyotlacatl**(Submitted: 02/04/2005 11:58 am )

""""By Joey Martin (Submitted: 02/04/2005 9:28 am )

It's a shame that this great nation of ours is starting to lean more towards a single minded way of thought and is turning its back on the multi-cultural and enlightened thinking that our nation was founded on.""""

WHAT?? What kind of statement is this? This country was not founded upon the thought of MULTI-CULTURALISM. It was founded for white anglo saxons only. THUS BLACK SLAVERY, INDIAN SLAVERY, INDIAN ANNIALATION. UNless you include these sick institutions as a nice fine process of MULTI-CULTURALISM, then you have been a bit brainwashed MR. MARTIN.

**By David Lopez** (Submitted: 02/04/2005 11:57 am )

Web ed, you might think about placing this link on your comment form:

<http://snipurl.com/>

*not a bad idea! ill talk to our programmer, too. Usually I make these links live when i pprove the posts - i can also start making them link from a text in the post, blog-style.*

Keeping the posts from creeping into the grey right side of the page would be a good thing.

**By Itzcoatl Coyotlacatl**(Submitted: 02/04/2005 11:42 am )

""""""By Khalil Spencer (Submitted: 02/04/2005 7:42 am )

As was said earlier, this Super's actions probably guarantee that every kid in the school will be reading it. Maybe he should ban the math and chemistry texts, too?""""""

Don't kid your self Khalil, IF the kids don't have to read the book, most probably will not. It's one more assignment they get away with not doing.

**By David Gunter** (Submitted: 02/04/2005 11:14 am )

Take heart, the kids at a school under this superintendent's power are taking action.

<http://snipurl.com/cjlc>

"NORWOOD — A group of "furious" Norwood High School students announced plans Thursday to stage a sit-in on school grounds at 8 a.m. today in protest of the banning and destruction of more than two dozen copies of a controversial book written in 1972 by an acclaimed Hispanic author from New Mexico.

"The students are demanding reversal of the ban of "Bless Me, Ultima," by University of New Mexico professor emeritus Rudolfo Anaya, and a letter of apology from Norwood School District R2J Superintendent Bob Conder, who made the decision to ban the book at the request of a group of parents."

**By Nancy Richardson** (Submitted: 02/04/2005 11:14 am )

Kids...well, any reader...will get out of a book what they're prepared to get out of it. To give a couple of benign examples, my sister read "Black Boy" when in junior high, and thought it was "just a story." I read "My Friend Flicka" a thousand times because I was horse-crazy, and didn't realize until high school that underneath the wonderful horse story were 1) the story of a boy maturing, and 2) the adult story of a marriage in trouble that resolved into a richer, happier relationship.

The idea of education is to prepare the student for ideas and for the world, not to prepare ideas and the world for the student.

**By David Lopez** (Submitted: 02/04/2005 11:11 am )

Rudolfo Anaya is more than a New Mexico treasure. He is indeed a National treasure.

<http://www.unm.edu/news/Releases/April23anaya.htm>

**By David Gunter** (Submitted: 02/04/2005 11:09 am )

Itzcoatl Coyotlacatl you need to learn to read or at least to pay attention to what you are reading. While you are at it, look up "sarcasm" in the dictionary.

Perhaps you are too irate over this story - and we all should be - to read clearly. Take another look at what Daniel Trujillo actually wrote.

**By David Gunter** (Submitted: 02/04/2005 11:06 am )

Itzcoatl Coyotlacatl you need to learn to read or at least to pay attention to what you are reading. While you are at it, look up "sarcasm" in the dictionary.

Perhaps you are too irate over this story - and we all should be - to read clearly. Take another look at what Daniel Trujillo actually wrote.

**By Jim Hill** (Submitted: 02/04/2005 11:00 am )

It's important that America have people willing to stand up for their beliefs -- for example, without Conder's bold statement I would probably never have thought to read Anaya's work. I think maybe I'll go to the library and pick some up...maybe I'll start with "Bless Me, Ultima".

Note to book-burners: The message you inevitably send is "if someone doesn't want me to read this, it's gotta be good."

**By Deb HG** (Submitted: 02/04/2005 10:50 am )

Rachel - GREAT post!!!! I totally agree!

**By Rachel Alarid** (Submitted: 02/04/2005 10:46 am )

To be honest, I honestly do not think I have ever seen a more united front on this board. Professor Anaya would be proud.

Basically, Superintendent Bob Conder has lost credibility as an educator and an administrator of this school district. It would be one thing to past judgement on a book that you have read, and state that it is your opinion that it is not appropriate.

But to call a book "garbage" without reading it, that is nonsense. But the upside has to be, that because of this people who may not have heard of this book before, will buy it and will be introduced to one of the greatest writers that New Mexico has ever produced.

**By Victor Gallegos** (Submitted: 02/04/2005 10:36 am )

Garbage uh? Just goes to show the ignorance and prejudice that people with preconceived notions about other cultures and ideas have. Thank God I nor my loved ones live in such a place as eastern Colorado. I read Bless Me Ultima when I was 14 Years old and it was such a magical piece of literature which ignited memories and scenes of my beautiful Norther New Mexico CULTURE and HERITAGE. Something these "people" are so obviously lacking.



**By Ana Gallegos** (Submitted: 02/04/2005 10:18 am )

Bless Me, Ultima was required reading in my daughter's junior high English class in Pasadena, California. This book was read and re-read by the students, talked about, excitedly recommended to friends, passed around through the rest of junior high and high school until new books needed to be purchased. It's a beautiful book. To this day, Bless Me, Ultima is my now college daughter's favorite book. Those poor Colorado students.

**By Khalil Spencer** (Submitted: 02/04/2005 10:01 am )

The Superintendent is not just a coward but a fool. He should resign, not only for his craven behavior before the offending parents and willingness to sell out his faculty, but for having the supremely bad judgement to allow a book burning to take place. I think one nation of brownshirts was enough.

Well, alluding to a recent campaign bumper sticker, Norwood is clearly one village that is not missing its idiots.

**By Joey Martin** (Submitted: 02/04/2005 9:28 am )

I think I can truly say that I am more offended by that "superintendent's" actions than by the concerns of one parent. The few instances of profanity in this book are purposely misspelled, at least in my dialect of Spanish, the patriarchal/chauvinistic behavior of the father is not explicitly detailed and Ultima herself could very easily be my great grandmother who was a midwife that healed and protected the people of a small remote mountain village in Northern New Mexico for decades. As with my great grandmother, if one would actually read the book they would find that in "Bless Me Ultima" the ancient pagan beliefs of our various ancestors do not replace Christianity but are studied in conjunction with Christianity to better understand a very complicated and often times mysterious and intolerant world that we live in. "Bless Me Ultima" is a book about a very strong component of our American history and culture in the southwest. Since I was required to learn about the history and development of places east of the Mississippi and next to nothing about my own family history here in the Southwest, it pleases me to know that there are at least some educators that recognize this discrepancy and are willing to at least include a important book like "Bless Me Ultima" to help students better understand the history and culture of a their people and of a people they share this land with. It's a shame that this great nation of ours is starting to lean more towards a single minded way of thought and is turning its back on the multi-cultural and enlightened thinking that our nation was founded on.

This "superintendent" is guilty of the same kind of fear and intolerance the villagers in "Bless Me Ultima" had against a kind and compassionate woman, all because they chose to be ignorant of their neighbor. Ignorance builds fear and fear builds hate. Haven't we seen this enough in history to know that by now?

**By Daniel Trujillo** (Submitted: 02/04/2005 9:25 am )

Thank you Caroline. IC doesn't really understand "things" does he. Like irony.

**By Rita Serrano** (Submitted: 02/04/2005 9:06 am )

It is amazing what some find objectionable. I read this book when I first moved to New Mexico (1988) and it became a favorite. Funny that I don't remember any foul language in this book. My recollection is that Anaya is an excellent writer. I have recommended this book to many including high school students and will continue to do so.

**By Caroline Mulvaney** (Submitted: 02/04/2005 9:02 am )

Itzy Coyo - It tells me that in A class, somewhere in A NM school it was assigned. As far as your last post, what you do need "to see", is that what you quote from DT is a quote from the article, which is why he put it in quotes. And as I said before, most of us understand the concept of quotes. No more.

**By Melissa Honigmann** (Submitted: 02/04/2005 9:00 am )

Kahlil - it says that this guy Conder - who hasn't even bothered reading the entire book - has not banned any other books in his six years as superintendent.

Bless Me Ultima was assigned reading when I was in ninth grade in Santa Fe. I am grateful that our teacher felt it was appropriate and I have reread it often. If it is not assigned to my children, I will have them read it nevertheless. Thank you Rudolfo Anaya for all your marvelous stories. You are a state treasure.

**By David Lopez** (Submitted: 02/04/2005 8:54 am )

From the Norwood Post:

Parents censor high school literature and are allowed to burn books they find offensive

By Margo L. Roberts

"Censorship reflects a society's lack of confidence in itself. It is a hallmark of an authoritarian regime." Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart-1966.

Recently a book that was being used as part of an English assignment was confiscated from freshmen at Norwood High School due to references of paganism and an alleged magnitude of profanity.

Here in Norwood, a small group of parents sent letters to Superintendent Bob Conder, expressing their concern over, Bless Me, Ultima, a book being used in the classroom as a literature book. Conder said the books, about 2 dozen in total costing \$6.99 each, were pulled from the classroom, and designated to be destroyed. The parents approached the superintendent and asked that they be able to burn the books instead of the school janitor destroying them.

Conder granted them their request, as he has the right to dispose of them. Conder informed the School Board in a letter after the fact. He further stated, "I can't dictate morality, but my job is to protect the kids. The books should have never been purchased, and were not properly disclosed for approval."

The author, Rudolfo Anaya, said in a phone interview, "Freedom of democracy is learned in our school systems." Anaya, who started teaching in a one room school house in New Mexico further stated, "Parents have the right to monitor what their children read, however they do not have the right to tell others what they can read. That is un-American, un-democratic and un-educational."

Conder said the books were not sold to recoup some of the cost or donated to a library elsewhere because, "I would not feel comfortable with those books possibly falling into another child's hands, and the return would not be more than 50 cents to a dollar a piece". When asked if the teacher who introduced the book to the students was in danger of being terminated, Conder said, "No, she was truly sorry for her lack of judgment"

An individual, who did not wish to be identified, felt this was reminiscent of the Nazi regime, and feared their job as a teacher was in jeopardy if parents could dictate the curriculum in such a manner. "Our kids already receive a limited exposure to knowledge because of our location, why limit them further." The individual stated they were familiar with the book, and that the profanity was limited. They added "There are many classic novels with a varying levels of profanity that can be found in the school's library; it all depends on the connotation and frequency of the words used."

Rudolfo Anaya, a professor emeritus of English at the University of New Mexico, wrote "Bless Me Ultima" in 1972. It explores the difficulty of reconciling conflicting cultural traditions. The main character, a young boy growing up in New Mexico during World War II, struggles with the complexities of his religion. He becomes increasingly frustrated by the failure of the Catholic Church to explain the most pressing questions about morality and human experience and is frustrated by his failure to find a forgiving god, and then finds an unlikely mentor in a local "healer" who comes to live with his family.

Many of the characters in the book are limited by their cultural prejudices and never learn to look beyond their own assumptions. Meanwhile the main character grows to understand that his experiences are lessons about life, and he knows that he must take life's lessons to heart, even when they are difficult,

painful, or disappointing. Learning the importance of tolerance marks his growth, especially as he begins to realize that some religions may be better suited to some people than to others.

The same book was chosen by other Colorado communities, such as Fort Collins, Boulder, and most recently Grand Junction at Mesa State College as the book of choice to be read as a community. Anaya commented, "The book should be judged in its entirety. There is some strong language in strong situations, but there is no flippant use of profanity."

The author was also aware that this same book had met with opposition in cities in Calif., Texas and New York. However the students in New York had the ban overridden by approaching the school board.

"Bless Me, Ultima" is currently on the Montrose High School's approved reading list for the sophomore class, according to Jeff Black of the MHS English Department.

**By Mary Annette Andermann** (Submitted: 02/04/2005 7:43 am )

Good morning, Roy! I haven't seen you in awhile on the boards. I have to agree. You know, throughout the ages, people have tried to demonize minorities for all kinds of things. This is just an outstretch of that...

**By Khalil Spencer** (Submitted: 02/04/2005 7:42 am )

Before bringing in the racism accusations, I'd want to see what other books are prohibited in this small school in a small town in W. Co. Could be they ban anything the least bit controversial, regardless of the ethnicity of who wrote it. Anyone done some background on this story?

As was said earlier, this Super's actions probably guarantee that every kid in the school will be reading it. Maybe he should ban the math and chemistry texts, too?

**By Roy Salazar** (Submitted: 02/04/2005 6:25 am )

I think the Norwood school superintendent is working in the wrong place. He should apply for *saint-hood* in some religious cult, and take along his high school angels with him. This is **America**, land of the free. We read what we want to read, that's part of being American. I don't think we live in a third world country. Dang! "this guy is blind to the bone." "Bless Me Ulitma" has to be one of the best books put out by a Hispanic writer, and this guy wants it out of the schools system? It sounds like stright outdiscrimination against Hispanic writers under a wolf blanket if you ask me. The Norwood school superintendent should be worrying about the reading scores in his school and let the parents handle religious moral issues.

**By Itzcoatl Coyotlacatl** (Submitted: 02/03/2005 10:47 pm )

Caroline Mulvaney, perhaps it was not mandatory for you but look at what Rmartinez says in the post just after Daniels

""""""By r martinez (Submitted: 02/03/2005 1:23 pm )

Our 16 year old son was assigned "Bless Me Ulitma" this Fall as required reading in his American Lit. class (Sophomore yrear)""""

Now what does that tell you?? Somewhere in the schools in NM it is required reading.

**By Itzcoatl Coyotlacatl** (Submitted: 02/03/2005 10:44 pm )

Caroline Mulvaney , Daniel did not mention it out right that he has not read "Bless Me Ultima" but he never says he has and he also feels he must go read the book to see what our superintendant found so dangerous. At the very least he is admitting not being familiar with the book as he needs to go "see" what has the "super" baning it. Guys like David Lopez , even I know why this "super" might want to bann it. I don't need to go read it "to see" like Daniel does.

Heres a QUOTE from Daniel:

""""By Daniel Trujillo (Submitted: 02/03/2005 1:02 pm )

"Now I feel it is my obligation to read it and see what our superintendent found so dangerous that it must be destroyed." - I love it. """"

**By Caroline Mulvaney** (Submitted: 02/03/2005 9:23 pm )

Itzy Coyo-I went to high school here and it was never mandatory reading. I don't believe that DT mentioned anywhere that he had not read it. He did quote somebody to that effect, and as most of us know the quotes mean somebody else said it. And what exactly is your culture and what book do you have on your "shelve" to promote it?

**By David Lopez** (Submitted: 02/03/2005 8:59 pm )

There is one short story in "The Silence of the Llano" that I challenge all men to read. It is the one about the man who finds his love, only to lose her. He must carry on with their daughter. It is an absolutely moving story. I wish I had the book, but I lend it to my Brother-in-law. He better have it when I go visit this weekend.

**By Greg Donoho** (Submitted: 02/03/2005 8:29 pm )

Daniel, I play bridge a lot, and read many bridge books and magazines. There are books of how to deceive the opponents with very clever stratagems. In the preface of one, Charles Goren, I believe it was said that before using these "tricks" you need to be sure that your opponents know enough about the game to even be tricked. Or as Jesus said, don't cast your pearls before swine.

IC's view of your book banning is a perfect example of this. lol

Now I have to go out and get the book.

**By Itzcoatl Coyotlacatl**(Submitted: 02/03/2005 7:32 pm )

Daniel Trujillo, Are you saying you have not read Bless Me Ultima??? Your not from New Mexico are you. I thought reading this book was mandatory in New Mexico High Schools. How old are you? You must still be in Junior High thats why you havent read the book yet.

""By Daniel Trujillo (Submitted: 02/03/2005 1:02 pm )

I am so glad that "Bless Me, Ultima" was banned. This ensures that way more people will know about the book and more people will read it. ""

Daniel, You are "GLAD" that this book was banned??? THis is ludicrous. THis book they say is the one that gives definition to YOU as a New Mexican. And you are glad it gets banned?? THis is not a joke! It gets banned, your culture gets banned. Maybe more people will read it for a short time, but after that, no one will hear about it. It can end up forgotten. And that which promotes your New Mexico Culture is lost. Even if the whole world continues reading it forever, It will be with the understanding that it is not for children. It will be placed on the shelve just shy of the Turner Diaries, Pornography , etc.. and that is what will be thought of your CULTURE as well. Really Daniel, Don't you know how to fight for your culture? Do you even know what your culture is?

**By Paloma Romo**(Submitted: 02/03/2005 4:47 pm )

Rudolfo Anaya is one of my absolute favorite authors, along with Sabine Ulibarri. Ever since inheriting my mom's Bless Me Ultima copy that she read at Highlands University the year it was published, it has been my most valuable possession. (In fact, after meeting Mr. Anaya at a book signing in Taos, he jokingly offered to buy my copy!) Mr. Anaya captures the true essence of Nuevo Mexico, and it's only a loss to ignorant people like this superindendent that they won't open themselves to the glimpse into Indo-Hispano gente, heritage, and history.

**By Teresa Mowry** (Submitted: 02/03/2005 2:59 pm )

OMG.... Bless me Ultima is my FAVORITE book!! I went to a Catholic school, and we read that book in 8th grade!! When we read it in class, my English teacher (Mr. Garcia) would change his voice for each character (based on how he was described in the book). It made for a very interesting class!!! That is one

book I always recommend to people who haven't read it.

**By James Durham** (Submitted: 02/03/2005 2:45 pm )

"Bless Me, Ultima" is one of my favorite books. Today's high school students can handle harsh language in a novel because they handle it every day in the high school cafeteria, on the radio, and on television. The superintendent would utilize his time more appropriately by addressing illiteracy and drug abuse among teen students.

**By Maria Leyba** (Submitted: 02/03/2005 1:56 pm )

Yes, Daniel it's that forbidden fruit thing.

**By David Lopez** (Submitted: 02/03/2005 1:54 pm )

A good reading list would be "Heart of Aztlan", followed by "Tortuga" and then "Albuquerque", read in that order.

It is interesting to compare the styles of Rudolfo Anaya and Tony Hillerman while reading "Rio Grande Fall" and "Coyote Waits" one after the other.

**By r martinez** (Submitted: 02/03/2005 1:23 pm )

Our 16 year old son was assigned "Bless Me Ulitma" this Fall as required reading in his American Lit. class (Sophomore yrear). I took the book up while he was not reading it since it had been many, many years since I'd read it. I once agian enjoyed the read and wondered why I hadn't done it sooner. Sure, is has some language, but nothing that isn't ehard on cable TV or for that matter on campus.

WONderful book - as are the other of Anays'a books I've read. BTW - my father is now re-reading Anaya's books - started with "Bless Me, Ulitma" on the plane heading to/from vacation. Perhaps it's because "we" can relate to the story. . . No, perhaps just a good read.

**By Daniel Trujillo** (Submitted: 02/03/2005 1:02 pm )

*IC your conclusions are not. How old are you anyway, Junior High School? (at the very least, this sort of paranoia was here from the beginning)*

I am so glad that "Bless Me, Ultima" was banned. This ensures that way more people will know about the book and more people will read it. - "Now I feel it is my obligation to read it and see what our superintendent found so dangerous that it must be destroyed." - I love it.

**By David Lopez** (Submitted: 02/03/2005 12:40 pm )

Rudolfo Anaya's books take the place on honor on my bookcase headboard. I read and re-read them until I wear them out, and then buy new copies.

Too profane for high schoolers? GIVE ME A BREAK.

Would Mein Kampf be better reading?

This is just veiled racism, probably against the Catholic church and the "Chicano" culture by a moran without a clue.

I hope Ultima's owl's hootings keeps Bob Conder from sleeping, until he finally WAKES UP!

And yes, Maria, Albuquerque is a wonderful book. Lots of Tortuga's loose ends are tied, but it leaves you wanting the sequels to the other classics.

**By Khalil Spencer** (Submitted: 02/03/2005 12:18 pm )

Wow. Even the casual Google of Professor Ayana just done by this gringo shows he is a great man.

With the caveat that I have not read the book, this is not the first or last time that a Superintendent will "cave in" on the side of caution. Personally, I found that by the time we were high school juniors and seniors, we didn't need such

protection. Frankly, its probably counterproductive.

As a related aside, my wife, a retired English professor, stepped into a political crossfire when she taught Lois-Ann Yamanaka's book "Blu's Hanging" to her community college class in Hawaii at about the same time that Ms. Yamanaka's fiction award was being given and revoked. I suspect Blu's Hanging would be banned in Colorado too as too rough for tender minds. Here is a discussion.

[http://www.asianweek.com/080698/a\\_e.html](http://www.asianweek.com/080698/a_e.html)

Life isn't always pretty. Thankfully, we have great authors who remind us of this. Let's not burn their message as if reality will go away. Good literature opens and refreshes the mind.

**By Judy Yelsky** (Submitted: 02/03/2005 11:56 am )

IC:

you are right about Michael Jackson being a white american.

**By Itzcoatl Coyotlacatl**(Submitted: 02/03/2005 11:46 am )

I think this Bob Condor guy is more insulted that the book is not about white americans. Certainly he knows the catchy tunes of Michael Jackson, Has seen Many shoot em up mel gibson /Clint Eastwood movies, Has heard of the carnage in Iraq, knows of many living beings forced into extinction, knows how profound global warming is going to be, Surely he's said many a bad words in his days, perhaps has inhaled etc.. etc.... And even being familiar with all that I've mentioned, He's deemed a Rudolpho Anaya book "OFFENSIVE" ????? Wake up people, There is a new game in town. A huge effort in place to undermine all that is different from the "PERCIEVED" dominant society. It's sweeping the nation. THE folks that have gained power have for years wanted to censor, deminish,in some cases completely strip, your rights away. THE've been blocked for years in the courts from doing this. But not anymore. Your all going to hear alot more of this until you've all been cornered into a mono cultured society. THis eliminates the threat of terrorism and rebellion from within. I guess the parania of a nation has set in.

**By Maria Leyba** (Submitted: 02/03/2005 10:49 am )

Nothing that Rudolfo Anaya writes is garbage!! What a moron. All of Anaya's works are wonderful. Has anyone read "Albuquerque" (original spelling)--it talks about so much history and our ancestors. Wonderful reading.

**By Robert Gallegos** (Submitted: 02/03/2005 10:44 am )

Bless Me Ultima--One of my favorite books

**By Jose villegas**(Submitted: 02/03/2005 10:10 am )

Good girl Rachel! I agree with you....It is so sad that some people like this Superintendent cannot get over the racism agenda that continues to plague the State of Colorado. I am sure that not all the people in Colorado fit his agenda, but it is so sad to see it happen time and time again.

**By Rachel Alarid** (Submitted: 02/03/2005 9:04 am )

*"It's less a matter of censorship than a matter of sponsorship. That's not the kind of garbage I want to sponsor at this high school,"*

I'm sorry, I thought book burning went out with the 80's. I have read "Bless Me Ultima", and do not understand how it can be labled as garbage? You have to look at a book in its entire context, what was going on in our country in which the year the story takes place, what are the attitudes of the people. Take for example "Huck Finn" no in civilized conversation of 2005 we do not use the "N" word, nor in the 21st century do we as Americans keep slaves. However, this was the reality of Mark Twain, and it is important to see where we once were and how we have evolved in a society.

It is actions like this superintendent that in my opinon only contributes to the ignorance of the youth and their perception of the world around them.

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