

Censorship in Southern Mississippi Prisons

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ABSTRACT

A lack of access to information due to censorship still exists in today's society, one example being within our prison facilities. In 2018, Big House Books, a nonprofit organization that sends free books by request to prisoners in Mississippi correctional facilities, filed a lawsuit against the Mississippi Department of Corrections and the South Mississippi Correctional Institution located near Leakesville, Mississippi, when the institution started returning books to Big House Books and requesting they only send religious books instead. Later that same year, the Human Rights Defense Center, a nonprofit organization working for criminal justice reform, filed a suit on behalf of prisoners of the Forrest County Jail located in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, stating that all books and periodicals other than the Bible and occasionally other Christian publications, had been banned from the facility.

The current study is an in-depth case study of these two cases of censorship in southern Mississippi correctional facilities. Through a series of qualitative interviews with individuals connected to the cases, the study seeks to better understand the current phenomenon of censorship in prisons. Participants included prison employees, lawyers, and others involved in the two cases. Whether it be through services such as an actual library or information center provided by the prison facility, or the facility allowing books and other materials to be sent to inmates, incarcerated individuals have the right to access information. This study seeks to enlighten and act as a catalyst for change regarding censorship that is occurring within prisons today.

ALISE RESEARCH TAXONOMY TOPICS

censorship; information ethics; information needs; information rights; information seeking; information use; intellectual freedom; social justice

AUTHOR KEYWORDS

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