



***Yaqui Delgado Wants to Kick Your Ass* by Meg Medina**

ISBN: 9780763671648 (Paperback); 9780763663544 (E-Book)

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*Age Range: 14 and up (Suggested by Publisher)

Grade Range: 7 and up (Recommended by *School Library Journal*)

BOOK SYNOPSIS

One morning before school, some girl tells Piddy Sanchez that Yaqui Delgado hates her and wants to kick her ass. Piddy doesn't even know who Yaqui is, never mind what she's done to piss her off. Word is that Yaqui thinks Piddy is stuck-up, shakes her stuff when she walks, and isn't Latin enough with her white skin, good grades, and no accent. And Yaqui isn't kidding around, so Piddy better watch her back. At first Piddy is more concerned with trying to find out more about the father she's never met and how to balance honors courses with her weekend job at the neighborhood hair salon. But as the harassment escalates, avoiding Yaqui and her gang starts to take over Piddy's life. Is there any way for Piddy to survive without closing herself off or running away? Who is Piddy, and who does she want to be?

REVIEWS AND PRAISE

★ "A nuanced, heart-wrenching and ultimately empowering story about bullying. . . . Interweaving themes of identity, escapism and body image, Medina takes what could be a didactic morality tale and spins it into something beautiful: a story rich in depth and heart. . . . Far more than just a problem novel, this book sheds light on a serious issue without ever losing sight of its craft." —[Kirkus Reviews](#), **starred review**

★ "Medina emphasizes Piddy's acute sense of isolation without overplaying it, and she absolutely respects the totality of Piddy's quandary. . . . The message here is that tough and unfair stuff is really tough and unfair, but it's also survivable; that's a takeaway that readers will recognize as both true and valuable." —[Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books](#), **starred review**

★ "Yaqui may think she's tough, but it's Piddy and some of the other female characters, namely Piddy's mother and her mother's flamboyant best friend Lila, who make more lasting impressions. Medina's setting stands out as well. . . . Teens will identify with Piddy's struggle." —[The Horn Book](#), **starred review**

★ "The Latino cultural milieu adds a richness and texture that lifts this up above many problem novels. The plot points are dexterously intertwined, and the characters are distinct. A real bonus for those looking for a bullying book for older readers that is not simplistic." —[School Library Journal](#), **starred review**

"An essential novel about teen bullying." —[The New York Times Book Review](#)

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“*Yaqui Delgado Wants to Kick Your Ass* should be taught in schools, read by counselors and parents, and used as a tool to discuss the importance of finding your voice, telling the truth and asking for help.” —[Common Sense Media](#)

“Meg Medina is the author I studied, and still study, to learn how to write for children. Her ear is impeccable; the way she captures not only dialogue but also communicates adolescent feelings without being condescending nor pitching extra soft softballs. Few people get the balance of writing *about* and *for* teens right.” —[Elizabeth Acevedo](#), *New York Times* best-selling author

“Piddy is a strong heroine whose sense of self is realistically jarred by her conflicting emotions. Medina effectively prods at the motivations behind bullying (without excusing it) and sensitively explores the delicate balance between belonging and maintaining individuality.” —[Publishers Weekly](#)

“This gritty novel manages to transcend the usual earnest fictional treatment by delivering a protagonist who is more than a mere victim and an ending that rings complicatedly true.” —[The Washington Post](#)

AWARDS AND ACCOLADES

- Winner of a Pura Belpré Author Award
- An American Library Association Notable Children’s Book
- An American Library Association Top Ten Quick Pick for Reluctant Readers
- A YALSA Best Fiction for Young Adults Selection
- A Cybils Award Winner
- A *School Library Journal* Best Book of the Year
- A *Kirkus Reviews* Best Young Adult Book of the Year
- A *Bulletin of the Center for Children’s Books* Blue Ribbon Winner
- A Nevada Young Readers’ Award Winner
- A University of South Florida Joan F. Kaywell Books Save Lives Award Winner
- An Américas Award Commended Title
- A Texas TAYSHAS Reading List Selection
- A Westchester Fiction Award Winner
- An Association of Children’s Librarians of Northern California Distinguished Book

MEDIA AND RESOURCES

[Discussion Guide](#)

[The PEN Ten/PEN America Author Interview](#)

[Fat Girl, Reading Blog Author Interview](#)

[C-SPAN Banned Books Panel with Meg Medina, David Levithan, and Coe Booth](#)

RESPONSE TO CHALLENGES

[A letter from the NCAC responding to Meg Medina’s being disinvited from speaking at a Virginia school:](#)

We write to protest the recent cancellation of Meg Medina’s visit to Cumberland Middle School. As we understand it, Ms. Medina’s invitation was rescinded after members of the community raised concerns about the title of her novel, *Yaqui Delgado Wants to Kick Your Ass*.

Depriving the district's students of the opportunity to hear a speaker because a few people object to or disapprove of what she has written violates basic constitutional principles. Under the First Amendment, it is unconstitutional to prohibit "the expression of an idea simply because society finds the idea itself offensive or disagreeable." *Texas v. Johnson* (1989). "[T]he Constitution exists precisely so that opinions and judgments, including esthetic and moral judgments about art and literature, can be formed, tested, and expressed. What the Constitution says is that these judgments are for the individual to make, not for the Government to decree, even with the mandate or approval of a majority." *US v. Playboy Entertainment Group* (2000).

These principles apply with equal force to school officials: "If there is any fixed star in our constitutional constellation, it is that no official, high or petty, can prescribe what shall be orthodox in politics, nationalism, religion, or other matters of opinion. . . ." *West Virginia Board of Education v. Barnette* (1943). Thus, "[l]ocal school boards may not remove books from school libraries simply because they dislike the ideas contained in those books. . . ." *Board of Education, Island Trees Union Free School District No. 26 v. Pico*, (1982). The fact that some people object to elements of Ms. Medina's book is not a valid reason for denying others, who do not share their views, the opportunity to hear from this acclaimed author.

No legitimate rationale can be advanced for disinviting Ms. Medina, who was asked to speak about her career as a writer and about the consequences of bullying. Making matters worse, the invitation was withdrawn peremptorily, with no opportunity for consultation, discussion, or input from others in the community who disagree with critics of the book or who simply relied on the knowledge and judgment of the teachers and librarians who organized the event. This action thus undermines the district's professional staff and sends the message that the district will engage in censorship to avoid controversy, rather than defend intellectual freedom.

Barring Ms. Medina from mentioning her recent book because of concerns over a word misunderstands the context of her work and disrespects her professionalism. Censoring frank discussion about the language of bullying and the powerful effect of certain words sends a message to students that these subjects and, by extension, their experiences, are not to be discussed; that though they may face cruel language and abuse in their daily lives, they are not mature enough to participate in a realistic conversation on this subject. A quality education reaches beyond facts and figures. Cumberland students deserve an education that engages them on a wide range of subjects and teaches them to think critically about issues they will face in their lives. Removing the opportunity to hear from an author about her work and ideas to avoid controversy is unacceptable. We urge you to reconsider your decision and reschedule the event.

AUTHOR STATEMENTS

[From a post on Meg Medina's blog about being disinvited from speaking at a Virginia school](#)

Let me start by saying that I am not making this up.

This week I was officially uninvited to speak on bullying at a middle school due to the title of my latest YA novel, *Yaqui Delgado Wants to Kick Your Ass*.

The timing could not have been more ironic. September is the month when the American Library Association celebrates Banned Book Week, our annual reminder about the importance of intellectual freedom.

Sure, the title has raised eyebrows—as I knew it would. But the title of my book wasn't an issue several months ago when I was contracted to be part of the school's anti-bullying event. *Yaqui Delgado Wants to Kick Your Ass* is the story of girl's unraveling as she navigates being in the crosshairs of a physical and emotional abuser. I had planned to talk about my own experience at the hands of a bully long ago—and all that the experience robbed from me. Then, as now, there were no easy answers, no clear path out of the torment that I couldn't trust the adults around me to stop. I had also planned to talk about how that ugly sliver of life became fiction and about how writing and books help us make sense of our life experiences, good and bad.

But last Friday, I received a painful email from the teacher who had reached out to me in the first place. She was apologetic as she explained that her principal needed reassurances. He needed to be sure that I would not

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state the name of my novel. Or show a slide of the cover. Or use “coarse language” during the presentation. These were fifth through eighth graders from a community that was described as “mixed” and who might not appreciate bad language.

I took a deep breath.

Here is part of my reply: *“For me to come to your school and distance myself from my work feels disrespectful of me as an author, but worse, it feels dishonest in dealing with the students, most especially those who are on the receiving end of harassment that already makes them feel ashamed. If I refuse to even name my book or tell them that the title comes from hearing those awful words firsthand, I would only be adding to that shame. As you mention in your email, you see this firsthand every day. I believe that one way we adults can help is to acknowledge the reality of what our kids are experiencing. . . .”*

In an effort to be fair, I suggested sending home a note to let the Concerned Adults opt out for their students.

No dice. The ax fell yesterday when the principal emailed me to say that our visit was cancelled. He explained that although he’d once been an English teacher, he had “other considerations” as a school principal. *Wow, I wanted to ask. What happened? And what could those considerations be, exactly, especially when the stakes are so high?*

I’ll say only this: I make absolutely NO APOLOGIES for the title of my book. The title is bold and troubling, and it suggests exactly what’s inside. Besides, we can fret all we want about the word *ass*, but that word isn’t the real trouble, is it? What’s hurting our kids is the savagery on their phones, and Facebook pages and in their classrooms. That, and the reluctance of those around them to step up and do the tough work of pulling the issue out into the open and talking about what bullying really looks and sounds like and about its radioactive impact that lasts for years into the future.

That’s what *Yaqui Delgado Wants to Kick Your Ass* is about. It’s not just a book with a coarse word in the title. The story tries to get at the truth of what our young people are dishing out or receiving. And most important to me, it’s a book that might have helped a kid like twelve-year-old [Gabrielle Molina](#) before she decided to take her own life earlier this year.

Read her story and ask yourself this: Would Gabrielle’s parents and teachers have objected to her reading a book with the word *ass* in the title if they knew it might have helped her survive?

[From a post on Meg Medina’s blog](#)

I’m alarmed by what’s passing for parental concern as it relates to pulling books. As your friend and neighbor, I want you to think long and hard about what you’re doing to school boards and to kids with your demands.

Novels for teens can range in tone and topic as widely as teens vary themselves. Often, we find main characters who are questioning society and what they have been taught. The characters push boundaries and face daunting obstacles as they evolve into the people they want to become. They often make risky, hair-raising choices and face unexpected consequences. This, my friends, reflects the messy and often heartbreaking process of growing up.

To pull books from a school library because of the discomfort they create in adults is a recipe for disaster. It erodes the trust young people have in the adults in their lives and pushes them to secrecy. It undermines the studied opinion of professional librarians and educators. It supports a false idea that there is one version of life that is acceptable. And, it denigrates the work of authors who are brave enough to name experiences that are difficult and real.

Every parent is entitled to engage with their child about what they read. They are always at liberty to ask for an alternative assignment in classrooms. That’s fair.

But that is a far cry from asking libraries to pull material from shelves and to insist that no other child should choose to read a particular title because a parent or group deems something too sexual or vulgar or outside their own comfort or value system.

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We are a varied community, with wildly diverse backgrounds, tastes, and experiences. If you find a book objectionable, don't read it. That's your right, and I respect it. It isn't more complicated than that. Just don't assume that you speak for everyone or that you have the right to demand a book's removal.

***A NOTE ON AGE RANGES**

A publisher-suggested age range covers the gamut of readers that publishers envision using the book, whether for independent reading, family sharing, group study, or in other ways. Educators have the best sense of the appropriate age range for the diverse learners they work with and understand these ranges vary depending on a book's intended use.