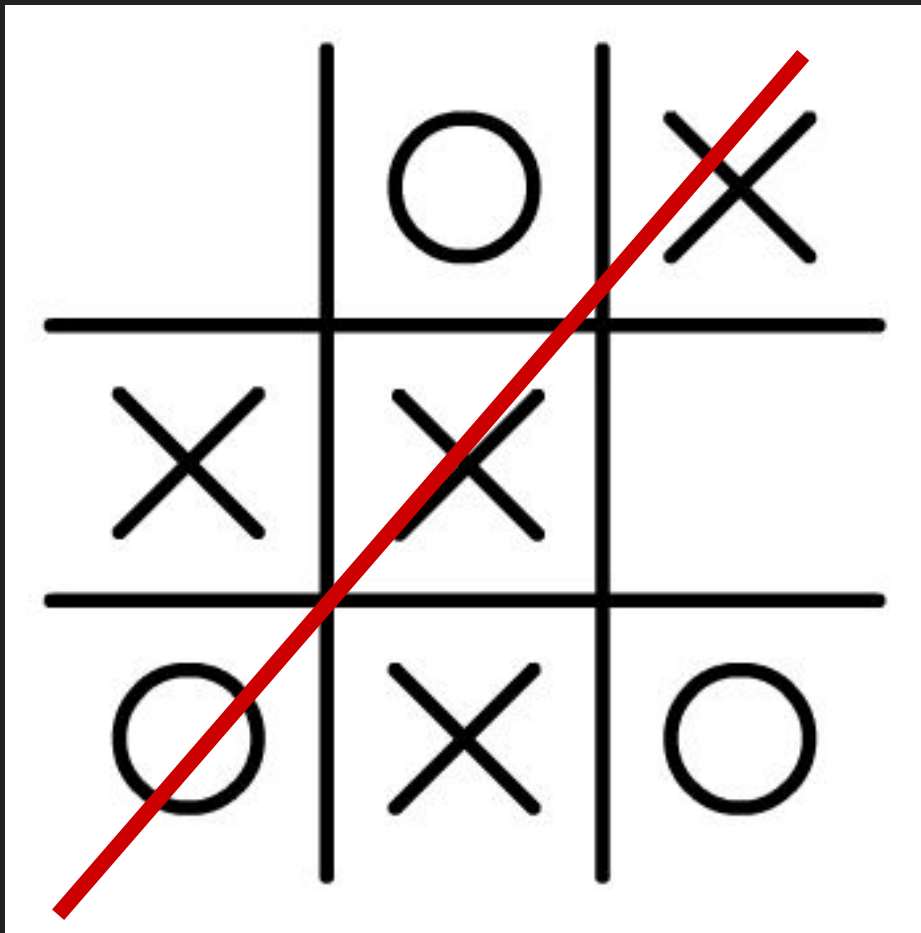


# The Alternative Truth Project

“Alabama Story” Uncovers a Lost Librarian Hero

Teri Holford, Engagement & Curriculum Collection  
UW La Crosse

Barry McKnight, Community Engagement  
La Crosse Public Library



# The Alternative Truth Project



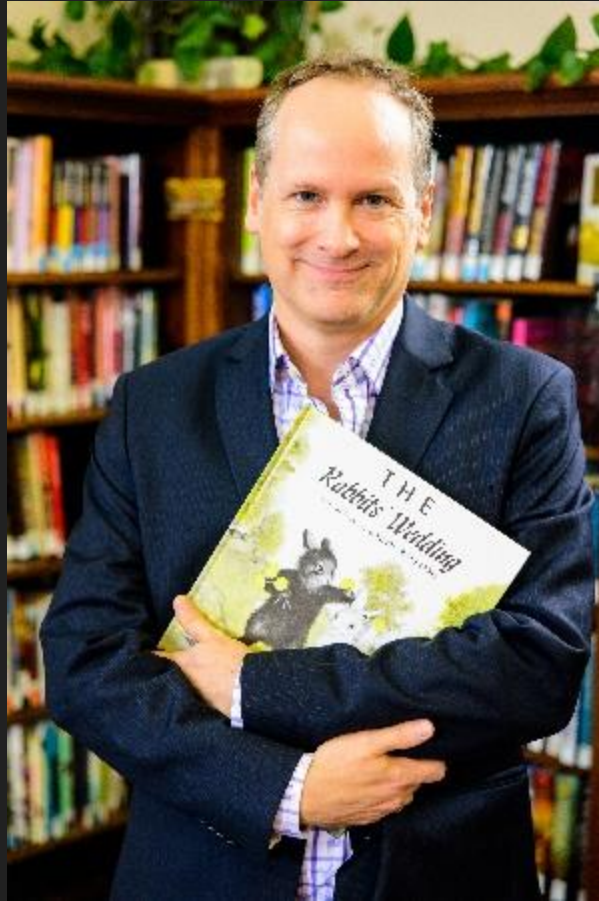
Drama in libraries?  
Libraries in drama.

# *Emily W. Reed, 89, Librarian in '59 Alabama Racial Dispute*

The New York Times, May 29, 2000



Obituary  
Emily Reed  
Former State Librarian of  
Alabama



Kenneth Jones,  
Alabama Story playwright

# Check it out: Librarians star in Alternative Truth Project reading of 'Alabama Story'



What's the story in Alabama Story?



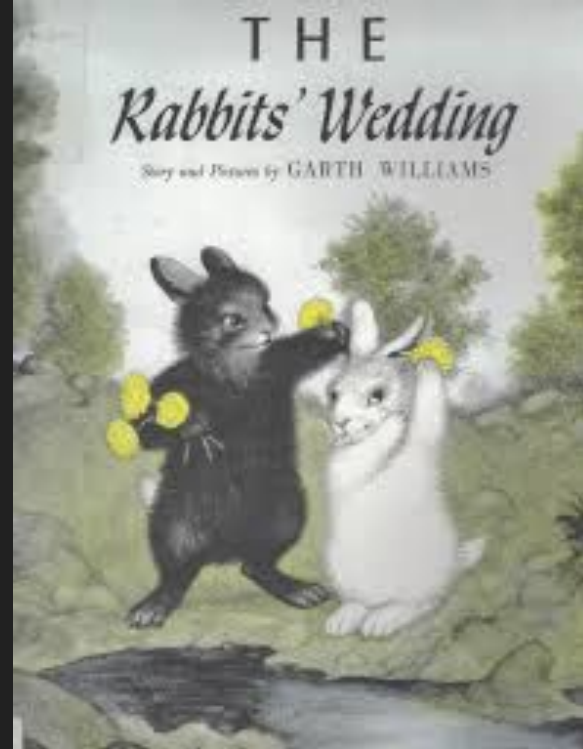


Emily Reed  
State Librarian of Alabama



Senator Oddins

## The book



1959. Montgomery, Alabama.  
Librarian stands up to big bully.  
[Watch.](#)

## Burn Rabbit Book, Urges Legislator

MONTGOMERY, Ala., May 22 (UPI)—An Alabama state legislator said today a children's book depicting the marriage of a white girl rabbit and a black boy rabbit should be burned.

State Sen. E. O. Eddins of Demopolis, a leader of segregation forces in the Legislature, said the picture book should be "taken off the shelves and burned" even though it is intended for preschool-age children.

"There are many other books of the same nature and others that are Communistic which should be burned as well," Eddins said.

The children's picture book, "The Rabbit's Wedding," intended for children under five years old, has been removed from the open shelves of Alabama public libraries because of segregation criticism.

Garth Williams, author of the book, said he was "completely unaware that animals with white fur were considered blood relations of white human beings."

Harper & Brothers said similar criticism of the book was sounded in Orlando, Fla.

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# *D.C. Appoints Librarian of Rabbit Row*

The Washington Post, January 12, 1960



Emily Reed: a turning point in ALA history

Fast forward 2000

Pioneer Theatre Co.  
Salt Lake City, UT January 2015





Peninsula Players  
Door County, WI  
August 2016



The Marlene Boll Theatre  
Detroit, MI  
October 2017







City Lights Theatre  
San Jose  
January 2018





Florida Studio Theatre  
Sarasota, FL  
April 2016



Clarence Brown Theatre  
Knoxville, TN  
January 2018





West Springfield, VT  
Majestic Theatre  
February 2018



Washington Stage Guild  
Washington DC  
April 2018

The script reading

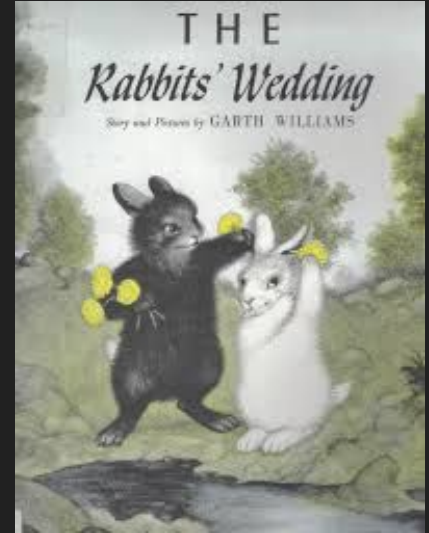
# Librarianship and neutrality

# What the author had to say



“I was only aware that a white horse next to a black horse looks very picturesque--and my rabbits were inspired by early Chinese paintings of black and white horses in misty landscapes.”

“...my story was not written for adults who will not understand it, because it is only about a soft, furry love and has no hidden messages of hate.”

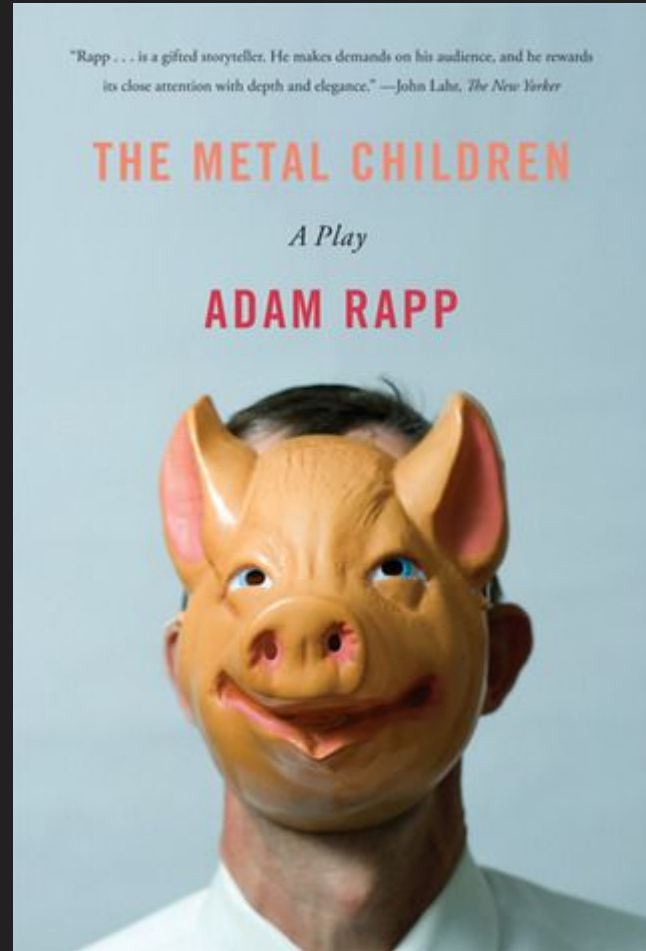




“The book has not been banned, but the agency has had some ‘difficulty’ about it. Some local libraries in the state still carry the book on their open shelves, but because of aroused feelings, it was felt best to pull the book off the state agency’s open shelves.”

Interview with Emily Reed in Montgomery, Alabama 1959

# The Metal Children





Where do librarians stand as a profession?

“My father...was chief physician. Physicians, at least in those days were more transient, I think. He once told me that doctors go where they are needed. I suppose librarians are the same way....I am not unfriendly to the problems of the South. I think the fact that I chose to accept library positions in the South should indicate that I was aware of the patterns I would have to live by. I have never made any effort to be a crusader in changing these patterns. Like a good doctor who does not judge the reason for an illness, but just treats it, a librarian must make books available. *I feel that the free flow of information is the best means to work out problems facing the South, the nation and the world. Librarians have a difficult time trying to please everyone.* Like doctors. Nobody likes to take medicine, but it seems to me that you want it prescribed by the most informed individuals.

*Doctors and librarians...you know, I had not made that connection before.”*

# References

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Lewis, Alison (ed). *Questioning Library Neutrality*. Duluth: Library Juice Press, 2008.

Jones, Kenneth. Personal notes for theater directors. July 2017.