

1241 Lakeshore Drive
Cleveland WI 53015
920.693.3357
judithp@tds.net
June 14, 2021

Kristin Stoeger, Executive Director
Chris Able, President Board of Directors
Members, Board of Directors
Manitowoc Public Library
707 Quay Street
Manitowoc WI 54220

Re: Revocation of Legacy Gift to Library

Dear Ms. Stoeger, Mr. Able, Ladies and Gentlemen of the Board,

For many years, the Library has been the recipient of a substantial legacy gift in my estate plan (a gift which would have put my name near the top of your proud list in the lobby of the Library). I am writing to inform you that I have removed the Library from my estate plan. The reason for my action is because of your recent actions and policies which I view as outside the mission of the Library, political in nature, financially irresponsible, harmful to your superior and dedicated staff, and harmful to the community as a whole whom you are supposed to serve.

The feelings expressed in this letter are solely my own, as I do not know nor have I consulted any staff or Board members. I have reviewed your mandatory staff training on white privilege and systemic racism and the costs associated with it. It made me think of Mao Zedong's Reeducation Camps. I also thought about how I might feel if I had been the recipient of such mandatory training. I would have reacted negatively to an outsider telling me who I am, what I believe, and my presumed deficiencies. We all bring our own life experience and history to these situations. I am a Jewish woman one generation removed from the Holocaust. I am a first generation immigrant whose parents fought tirelessly for Civil Rights for decades. Each individual brings his or her own story and background to the "training."

In our present environment, where tenured faculty and eminent medical professionals are demoted and fired for the content of their speech and research, it would be impossible for Library staff to voice any protest to this "training" without risking their jobs. Training which opens with a Black, clenched fist is political. In no way can I see it as appropriate to the mission of the Library. How does this "training" contribute to the Library as a safe space for the community it serves? It is polarizing, not uniting.

I cannot fathom how you approved the costs: The dollar cost, the cost of closing the Library to the public, and the indirect costs of how that money and time could have been otherwise spent. I am curious what prompted this training. Is there a study which justifies the need for the expenditure of time, money and cost to the community? Whether the dollar cost was subsidized by grants or not, it is a political and inappropriate use of funds. In short, I no longer trust your judgement in running the Library.

I have always found the Library staff to be professional, courteous, helpful, patient and kind. They have educated me as to changing culture and mores in the community. It is my experience and my belief that people of this community in general, and the Library staff in particular, are consistent and fair in implementing and enforcing the rules. It is beyond disheartening that

you would not also assume that your staff treats each and every patron professionally regardless of race, gender, religion, or national origin.

We can all learn more. We can all do better. Why can't we approach this with the assumption that we all bring strengths and good will to the table? Should the Library wish to diversify its collection, or bring attention to diverse authors, or educate the community on diverse historical events, as just three examples within its mission, I am sure there are state and national resources galore which support these endeavors for libraries.

I used to feel the Library was a warm and welcoming space. Now, I feel you have polarized this safe space. I no longer wish to linger there. As a single, professional woman, I had a long and arduous task to create an estate plan that adequately expressed my legacy and gave me peace of mind. I was proud and comfortable that the Library was an important part of my life's work. You have taken from me not only the Library as a safe space, but my legacy as well.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Judith Perlman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Judith" and last name "Perlman" clearly distinguishable.

Judith Perlman

cc: The West Foundation