

Tattered Cover's Position Regarding the Occupy Denver Boycott Dated March 21, 2014

First of all we support their right to assemble, picket, protest and voice their opinions, even while we consider their actions misplaced, misguided and misspoken with regard to the Tattered Cover. As we see it, by those actions we believe they are attempting to pressure us to rescind our 40-year history of serving our customers without bias.

In this instance their cause is the repeal of the overnight camping ban ordinance, which was passed by the Denver City Council in 2012. They want the Tattered Cover to support their position, the repeal of the ban, and they are calling for this boycott because we stand on our long held policy as follows:

The Tattered Cover does not take a public position, *pro or con*, on any issue except censorship and to a much lesser degree on matters of internal importance to the book industry.

It is not a matter of neutrality. It is a nonjudgmental standard that we as professional booksellers apply to our inventory selections, author events, and to the welcome we extend to all of our visitors no matter what their political, social, economic or religious persuasion. The Tattered Cover strives to offer a haven for all kinds of ideas that can be explored, agreeable or disagreeable; where those who seek to think critically and develop their own political and social ideals can do so unencumbered by what others want them to think, read or do. We do not inhibit them by pushing our own individual agendas or any official store position (no matter how socially worthy); nor do we allow a vocal minority from the outside to coerce us into deciding for those who visit our store what they “should” be reading, thinking or promoting. We have stood firm in the past in the face of boycotts and challenges, continuing to stock controversial books and welcome controversial authors (even when we may have been in conflict personally with their opinions or agreeable to them).

Occupy Denver contends that because the Tattered Cover is a member of the Downtown Denver Partnership, it supports the ban because the Partnership took an active role in supporting its passage. As with any membership, there are issues with which we may be in agreement or disagreement from time to time. However, the TC does not take a public stand on them.

The Tattered Cover is also a long time member of the ACLU, which took an active role in opposing the ban. Somehow, that's lost on the Occupy Denver folks. It begs the question of WHY they choose to focus on one and not the other membership relative to their charge that the Tattered Cover is voting with its wallet? And it completely ignores the fact that organizations can have many interests and attributes that are at work to the betterment of the community (not all of which may suit all of the membership all of the time).

And, with respect to the Downtown Denver Partnership, Occupy, for all of its vitriol

toward that organization, seems to be conflicted in its message, chastising the organization for involving itself as a representative of some parts of the business community in the workings of local government, while demanding (through the onerous tool of boycott) the involvement of other businesses like the Tattered Cover to involve itself on behalf of Occupy's point of view regarding the workings of that same governmental entity. Through BOYCOTT!

As this boycott has progressed Occupy has promulgated specious and distorted statements accusing the Tattered Cover of inhumane treatment of the homeless, to enhancing profits at the expense of the homeless, when nothing could be further from the truth. They have cited as fact, the untrue statement that by opening stores at the DIA airport the Tattered Cover is using ill-gained profits from shutting out the homeless. A curious charge given the number of homeless individuals who have populated our stores and rested in our chairs over the many years we have served this community and continue to do so. Curious, too, given the DIA stores are set up as a license agreement. And curious, given the amount of press on it, that Occupy is not aware of how tough it has been in the book industry to even stay in business.

Many retail bookshops have closed, or at the least reduced their inventories. Others have reduced space to cut rent expenses, the Tattered Cover included. All of us who are still around are doing our best, of course, to increase sales in order to pay the bills and meet the payroll. In so doing, maybe it's opening a satellite store; expanding products to include sundries, gifts or used books; or any one of a number of efforts to provide extra service to our customers. Part of that service at the Tattered Cover is to continue to protect your freedom of choice when it comes to the availability of books.

Were we to give in to Occupy Denver's pressure tactics, when would the next issue surface? A book they find objectionable? An author whose ideas don't conform to their social and economic criteria? Will they stand aside then and let us serve our customers without bias? Or will we see yet another boycott? ? (with the claim that it is a humanitarian issue, not a political one.)

The protesters maintain that by not taking a public stand against the Ban that the Tattered Cover supports it. The reasons behind Tattered Cover's policy are neither avoidance nor veiled support of the Ban but rather a strong sense of commitment to support the individual's freedom to read and the unfettered pursuit of information.

We at the Tattered Cover Book Store thank you for reading this message and we hope to continue to serve you as you explore the world of books in the future.

Sincerely,

Joyce Meskis

Owner, Tattered Cover Book Store