

Statement of Mississippi Writers Opposing HB 1523

Mississippi has a thousand histories, but these can be boiled down to two strains: our reactionary side, which has nourished intolerance and degradation and brutality, which has looked at difference as a threat, which has circled tightly around the familiar and the monolithic; and our humane side, which treasures compassion and charity and a wide net of kinship, which is fascinated by character and story, which is deeply involved in the daily business of our neighbors. This core kindness, the embracing of wildness and weirdness, is what has nurtured the great literature that has come from our state. What literature teaches us is empathy. It reminds us to reach out a hand to our neighbors—even if they look different from us, love different from us—and say, “Why, I recognize you; you’re a human, just like me, sprung from the same messy place, bound on the same hard road.” Mississippi authors have written through pain, and they have written out of disappointment, but they have also written from wonder, and pride, and a fierce desire to see the politics of this state live up to its citizens. It is deeply disturbing to so many of us to see the rhetoric of hate, thinly veiled, once more poison our political discourse. But Governor Phil Bryant and the Mississippi legislators who voted for this bill are not the sole voices of our state. There have always been people here battling injustice. That’s the version of Mississippi we believe in, and that’s the Mississippi we won’t stop fighting for.

The 95 undersigned writers from Mississippi stand opposed to any violation of civil rights, including discrimination against LGBTQ citizens, and call for the repeal of the recently enacted House Bill 1523.

Ellis Anderson	Kelly Ellis	James Kimbrell	James Seay
Ace Atkins	W. Ralph Eubanks	Taylor Kitchings	Kevin Sessums
Howard Bahr	Beth Ann Fennelly	Jamie Kornegay	Gary Sheppard
Angela Ball	Ellen Ann Fentress	Kos Kostmayer	Katy Simpson Smith
Marion Barnwell	William R. Ferris	Catherine Lacey	Matthew Clark Smith
Steven Barthelme	Ann Fisher-Wirth	Kiese Laymon	Michael C. Smith
Matt Bondurant	Tom Franklin	T. K. Lee	Michael Farris Smith
William Boyle	Martha Hall Foose	Beverly Lowry	Kathryn Stockett
Carolyn Brown	Christopher Garland	Richard Lyons	Donna Tartt
Kelly Butler	Melissa Ginsburg	Suzanne Marrs	Tate Taylor
Jimmy Cajoleas	John Grisham	C. Liegh McInnis	Wright Thompson
Sarah C. Campbell	Matthew Guinn	Margaret McMullan	Natasha Trethewey
Julie Cantrell	Minrose Gwin	Greg Miller	Tiffany Quay Tyson
Hodding Carter III	Becky Hagenston	Mary Miller	Jesmyn Ward
Hodding Carter IV	Derrick Harriell	Andrew Malan Milward	Brad Watson
Maari Carter	Brooks Haxton	Benjamin Morris	Larry Wells
Jim Dees	Gerard Helferich	Family of Willie Morris	Neil White
James Dickson	Ravi Howard	Scott Naugle	Curtis Wilkie
Kendall Dunkelberg	Lisa Howorth	Teresa Nicholas	Ruth Williams
William Dunlap	T. R. Hummer	Michael Pickard	Austin Wilson
Lee Durkee	Greg Iles	Catherine Pierce	Gerry Wilson
Margaret Eby	Deborah Johnson	John Pritchard	Steve Yarbrough
John T. Edge	Rheta Grimsley Johnson	Douglas Ray	Steve Yates
Liz Egan	Michael Kardos	Julia Reed	