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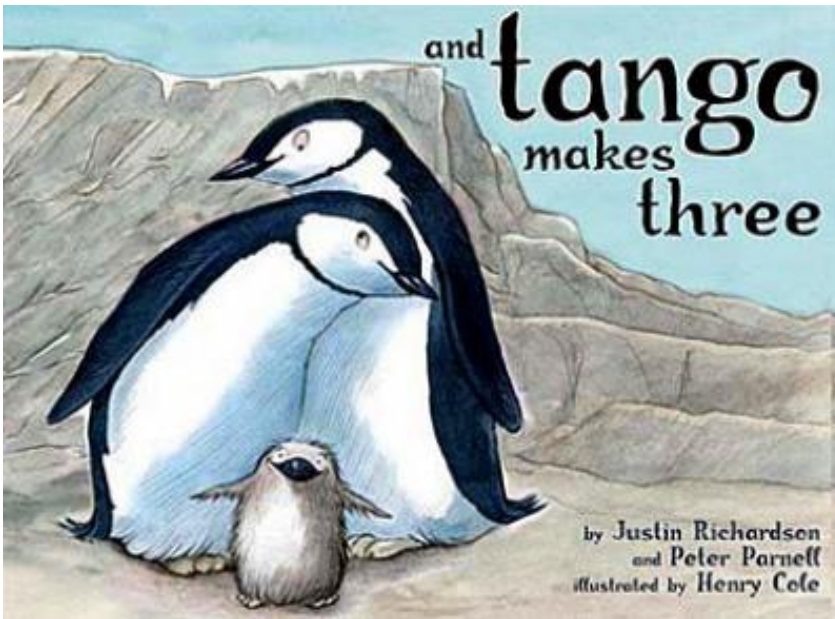
Headline: Singapore libraries remove three LGBT-inclusive kids' books

## Singapore Libraries Remove Three LGBT-Inclusive Kids' Books

**Books featuring gay penguin dads and other same-sex parents draw complaints from a patron, and authorities respond.**

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BY TRUDY RING



Some Singaporeans apparently consider gay penguins a threat.

The Singapore National Library Board this week confirmed it would remove and destroy all copies of three LGBT-inclusive children's books: *And Tango Makes Three*, the fact-based story of two male penguins raising a chick at the Central Park Zoo in New York City; *The White Swan Express: A Story About Adoption*, which includes a lesbian couple, and *Who's in My Family: All About Our Families*,

which features a variety of family configurations, reports Yahoo! News.

The removal came after a complaint from a single library patron, Teo Kai Loon, who is also a member of an antigay Facebook group. There was immediate outcry against the action, including online petitions, but National Library Board officials told the media Thursday that they would not reinstate the books.

"We take a cautious approach, particularly in books and materials for children," said a statement issued by the board, according to Time's website. "NLB's understanding of family is consistent with that of the Ministry of Social and Family Development and the Ministry of Education."

Also, in a response to Teo, chief librarian Tay Ai Cheng wrote that the library board "takes a strong pro-family stand in selecting books for children" and "when library visitors like yourself highlight to us any conflicting content within books, we review such books thoroughly and withdraw them from circulation," notes Yahoo! News. The library board receives about 20 complaints a year and acts on only about a third of them.

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Those denouncing the move include transgender writer Leona Lo, who tweeted, "I've e-mailed NLB to ask them to withdraw my books too — they can pulp them if they want. Better to burn and die a dignified death." Poet Alvin Pang said on Twitter that the destruction of the children's books is "a senseless waste of taxpayer's money. At least offer them up for sale or donate them."

In an interview with Time, Kirpal Singh, associate professor of English literature at Singapore Management University, called the books' removal "a very unfortunate step backwards" for the Asian city-state. "While we try to balance the conservatives and liberal minded, do we remove anything or everything that gives offense, especially if this offense is quite problematic, quite complex?" he said.

Gay sex is criminalized in Singapore but rarely prosecuted. Still, the city-state has a substantial and increasingly vocal LGBT population. The annual Pink Dot LGBT rights rally, which began in 2009, drew a record 26,000 attendees this year.