

~~GENCENSORED~~

NATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR THE REFORM  
OF THE OBSCENE PUBLICATIONS ACTS

NCROPA

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**FIGHTING SEXUAL CENSORSHIP**

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HONORARY DIRECTOR - David Webb, R.A.D.A. Dip.,

PLEASE NOTE NEW ADDRESS:  
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SW3 5YT  
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NO/DAW/DP

6th March 1998

E. Crew, Esq.,  
Chief Constable,  
West Midlands Constabulary,  
P.O. Box 52,  
Lloyd House,  
Birmingham,  
B4 6NQ.

*Jan Chief Constable Crew,*

Re: Seizure of Photographic Illustrations taken  
from book on the Work of Photographer Robert  
Mapplethorpe

The National Campaign for the Reform of the Obscene Publications Acts (NCROPA) is appalled by the action of officers under your command in seizing photographs taken by a university arts student from illustrations in a university library book about the work of the late and celebrated United States photographer Robert Mapplethorpe, published by Random House UK Ltd., and which has been in the public domain and freely available in this country since 1992.

Although we accept that the iniquitous Obscene Publications Act of 1959 is still very much on the Statute Book, and that the UK is still disgracefully subject to the draconian provisions of this archaic and repressively authoritarian piece of State Censorship legislation (which should long since have been repealed, as virtually all other such similar legislation has been repealed in almost all other so-called 'free' western-world countries), we do not expect idiosyncratic police forces, acting on the whims of individual police officers, to be permitted to set themselves up as the arbiters of what is and what is not legally "obscene", an evaluation which, even when the absurd "deprave and corrupt" test is applied, can never be anything other than entirely subjective.

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We have also protested to Dame Barbara Mills, the Director of Public Prosecutions, asking her to reject your officers' absurd contention, and we trust that she will roundly do so.

However, even if she foolishly does not, the rightfully incensed University of Central England and the publishers of the book have vowed to fight vigorously any legal moves against it and there is no doubt in our minds that they would triumph, leaving the West Midlands Police Force, whose past reputation has hardly been a glittering one, even more tarnished and yet another scandalous waste of public money as the result of the futile pursuit of victimless, alleged 'crime'.

We very much hope you will not allow this to happen and that a modicum of tolerance and common-sense will return to your operations.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Webb', written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish underneath.

David Webb,  
Honorary Director,  
National Campaign for the Reform of the Obscene Publications Acts

Copies to:- The Managing Director, Random Books UK Ltd.,  
The Chancellor, University of Central England.