

May 27, 2012

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LITIGATION III, ANTITRUST DIV.
U.S. DEPT OF JUSTICE

Dear Mr. Read:

I am writing to you both as a novelist and as a devoted reader, and as a concerned citizen. It is with sinking dread that I have watched the U.S. Department of Justice's investigation into the question of whether five leading publishers engaged in price-fixing and I was distressed to learn that three of those publishers reluctantly) agreed to settle the case rather than wage an expensive battle in the courts. I understand that there's a "waiting period" before the DOJ finalizes its course of action and **I would like to express in strongest possible terms that I firmly oppose the settlement and sincerely hope the DOJ will reject it.**

As an author, I have spent the last few years watching hundred of bookstores closing around the country as Amazon essentially rules the market with its predatory pricing, favoritism and crushing business practices. As a result, I was relieved to learn the Justice Department would at last be turning its sights on their dangerous monopoly. What a terrible moment indeed when I opened the newspaper in April to learn that the DOJ wouldn't be investigating Amazon's 90% stranglehold on e-books but instead turned its sights on five of the six biggest publishers (sure, Apple's its own monolith, but it's a minor player in the realm of books). As David Carr noted in the *New York Times*, it's the "modern equivalent of taking on Standard Oil but breaking up Ed's Gas 'N' Groceries on Route 19 instead."

Do we want bookstores to go the way of record stores? More importantly, do we want to live in a country where one company can essentially own an industry? Where the only books readers will even find out about, much less buy, are the ones Amazon tells them about (and now, as a publisher itself, they have the privilege of only promoting their own books)? The potential consequences (to publishers, to booksellers, and to authors) would be disastrous—and I don't just mean economically. Amazon's discounting has decimated publishers' physical distribution chain and it has closed countless bookstores across the country. Most painfully to me, however, it has meant that readers will lose all choice, and they won't even know it because they won't have any other outlet to learn about, share or purchase books.

Essentially, DOJ's actions threaten to kill real competition in order to offer the "appearance" of competition. *This would be heartbreaking for all of us who value books, and the culture and world of ideas they support.*

I urge you to reject the proposed settlement and assure a future where books matter, readers matter, choice matters.

Respectfully,



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