

FAITH & JUSTICE

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Teed Off

A School Moves To Silence A Student's Quiet Objection To Gender Ideology

The Ongoing Threats Against Pregnancy Centers
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THERE ARE ONLY TWO GENDERS

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Minutes With Kristen

How Jack's Stand Has Changed Countless Lives

By Kristen Waggoner
CEO, President & General Counsel



Kristen Waggoner and
Jack Phillips at the
U.S. Supreme Court in
December 2017.

It seems like yesterday. On a wintry day in 2017, I walked down the steps of the U.S. Supreme Court with Jack Phillips, the owner of Masterpiece Cakeshop, having just argued his case. In that moment, Jack wasn't just a cake artist. He was the First Amendment's greatest champion.

Jack won his case. The court ruled that the Colorado Civil Rights Commission had shown "clear and impermissible hostility" toward Jack's religious beliefs when it punished him for declining to create a custom cake to celebrate a same-sex wedding. But because the court sidestepped the free speech question, Jack's freedom was left open to new attacks. More than six years later, he is now in his *third* lawsuit — this time before the Colorado Supreme Court.

**I've been amazed at the many times
God has used Jack's story of
faithfulness in unexpected ways.**

“

Kristen Waggoner

Upsetting as that is, I've been amazed at the many times God has used Jack's story of faithfulness in unexpected ways. Jack's case at the U.S. Supreme Court laid the groundwork for last summer's landmark victory in *303 Creative*. In that case, the high court ruled that Colorado cannot punish website designer Lorie Smith — or any American — for speaking consistently with their beliefs. And it was Jack who inspired Lorie to file suit.

Jack's courage has inspired countless ADF clients to stand in the face of hostility. Personally, I have met dozens of young Christian law students who say his example is what propelled them to pursue a career in the law.

But Jack's impact has even touched the lives of unbelievers. I was reminded of this recently, listening to remarks from Ayaan Hirsi Ali, a Somali-born human rights activist. Ayaan grew up under fundamentalist Islam but fled to the West to avoid a forced marriage. She embraced Western values, especially free speech and equality for women. Believing these to be the fruits of secularism, she abandoned belief in God and became an atheist.

But something new began to stir in Ayaan several years ago. As intolerance began to unravel the secular world, she began to question her atheism. That propelled her along a journey that eventually led her to faith in Christ last year. But what was it that awakened her to the rising secular intolerance? In her words, "It was the cake-baking story."

"There are millions and billions and trillions of cakes," she said. "They didn't have to get it from Jack. And I woke up to that." She added, "What Jack has done is make an example of *them*. Because people like me would not have woken up to the reality that it is these activists who are intolerant."

This is why we litigate. This is why we stand. Not only to protect our freedoms, but to allow God's people — in every walk of life — to bear witness to the truth so that others might come to the light. **A**

Jack's third case is currently before the Colorado Supreme Court. Read more on p. 3.

News & Quick Takes

Case Updates From Around The World

Washington

ADF has filed a federal lawsuit against Washington state officials who refused to renew a Christian couple's foster care license because the couple could not in good conscience agree to promote the state's gender ideology to foster children.

Inspired by the biblical command to care for widows and orphans, Shane and Jennifer DeGross served as foster parents for nine years. When they tried to renew their license in 2022, the licensing agency informed them that state officials had enacted new regulations requiring all foster parents to agree to use pronouns that don't match a child's sex, should they end up caring for a child struggling with gender dysphoria.

The DeGrosses told the agency they would love and support any child placed in their home, but they could not speak or promote views contrary to their faith. The agency sought a religious exemption from the regulations on their behalf, but Washington officials declined to grant an exemption and rejected their renewal application.

Washington is putting families like the DeGrosses to an impossible choice: speak against your faith and lie, or give up the opportunity to care for hurting children.

“

Johannes Widmalm-Delphonse
ADF Legal Counsel



Shane
and Jennifer
DeGross



Jack Phillips at the Colorado Supreme Court, following oral argument in *Masterpiece Cakeshop v. Scardina*.

Colorado

The Colorado Supreme Court heard oral argument in June for cake artist Jack Phillips' third case. ADF attorneys representing Jack and Masterpiece Cakeshop appealed a Colorado Court of Appeals decision that would force him to express messages that violate his beliefs.

Autumn Scardina, a male who identifies as a woman, attempted to order a pink cake with blue icing to symbolize and celebrate a transition from male to female. Masterpiece Cakeshop respectfully declined the request because the cake would express a message in conflict with Phillips' religious beliefs.

Scardina requested the custom cake the day the U.S. Supreme Court announced it would hear Phillips' first case, in June 2017. In that case, Colorado was attempting to force him to create a custom cake celebrating a same-sex wedding, and Phillips prevailed.

"Phillips has suffered enough," the opening brief in *Masterpiece Cakeshop v. Scardina* explains. "[Colorado's] past prosecutions generated death threats and vandalism and cost Phillips six years of his life, a significant part of his business, and most of his employees — harms that endure even though he eventually won his legal cases.... This crusade against Phillips should stop."

Indiana

An Indiana high school student and her pro-life student group were derecognized for trying to post flyers that were deemed “political.” Represented by ADF and Indiana law firm Charitable Allies, the student and the group are appealing a district court’s decision against them.



An SFLA student at the 2021 March for Life.

At the beginning of the 2021-22 school year, the student met with the principal of Noblesville High School to discuss forming a chapter of Students for Life of America. The principal approved the club, and 30 students signed up for NSFL (Noblesville Students for Life) at the school’s fall activities fair shortly thereafter.

A few weeks later, the student sought permission to post flyers that included photos of students holding signs in front of the Supreme Court reading, “I Reject Abortion” and “Defund Planned Parenthood.” School staff who reviewed the flyer objected to the photos, saying the flyer could not be “political.” Soon after, the principal derecognized the group.



Pakistan

A court in Pakistan has annulled the forced marriage of a Christian girl, Reeha Saleem, who was 17 years old and a student in grade 8 when she was abducted on her way home from school in 2019. She was then forced to convert to Islam and marry her Muslim abductor.

The Family Court in Pattoki, Pakistan, found that Reeha had not married her abductor willingly and that her signature on the marriage certificate had been obtained through coercion during her captivity. In the proceedings, Reeha denied that she had converted to Islam and reiterated her Christian faith.

In Pakistan, women and girls from religious minorities face acute risk of forced conversion coupled with forced marriage. ADF International supported Reeha’s legal defense and is leading advocacy efforts for the prevention of forced conversion and marriage in Pakistan.

It is our hope that the annulment of Reeha’s forced marriage will be a positive step forward for the thousands of women and girls in Pakistan who face similar ordeals.

“

Tehmina Arora, Director of Advocacy, Asia
ADF International

Finland

Finnish parliamentarian Päivi Räsänen, who was unanimously acquitted of “hate speech” charges by two courts, has now had her case appealed to the country’s Supreme Court.

Räsänen, who is also a former Minister of the Interior of Finland, stands criminally charged for sharing her faith-based views on marriage and sexual ethics on X (formerly Twitter) in 2019 and in a pamphlet she wrote for her church in 2004, centered on the biblical text “male and female He created them.”

The parliamentarian’s case will again be heard alongside Bishop Juhana Pohjola, who faces charges for publishing Räsänen’s pamphlet. Their cases have garnered global media attention, as human rights experts have voiced concern over the threat posed to free speech in Finland. ADF International is supporting their defense.

Päivi Räsänen



Special Feature

The Ongoing Threats Against Pregnancy Centers

Pro-Life Pregnancy Centers Help Women.
Why Are Government Officials And Activists
Standing In Their Way?

By Charles Snow

It Started With A Leak

It was May 2022. An unprecedented leak of a draft opinion in the pending U.S. Supreme Court case of *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* shocked Washington and the wider world. *Roe v. Wade*, it seemed, was going to be overturned.

The furor was instant.

Protests, harassment, and calls to pack the Supreme Court followed. There was even a credible threat of assassination. The would-be assassin told police that he was going to break into Justice Brett Kavanaugh's house to

“kill the Supreme Court justice” in order to “give his life purpose.”

But some of the most shocking targets were the very places that provide necessary, life-affirming care to women, children, and families in need: pro-life pregnancy centers.

“[A] man approached our care center [armed] with a ... machete,” Heidi Matzke, executive director of Alternatives Pregnancy Center in California, told Congress in July 2022. Matzke, a former Alliance Defending Freedom client, said her center had to spend roughly \$150,000 to protect themselves and their patients.

“We have been forced to hire 24-hour, on-site security,” she told Congress. “We’ve had to reinforce doors and bulletproof our walls. We’ve had to paint our building with anti-graffiti coating. We’ve added cameras, armed our staff with pepper spray, and stopped running our mobile clinic because of threats of violence.”

Pregnancy centers across the country were threatened, vandalized (with messages like “ABORTION IS LIBERATION” splashed across their doors in blood-red paint), and even firebombed. A violent pro-abortion group, Jane’s Revenge, claimed responsibility for many of the attacks.

More than two years later, the threats against pregnancy centers have calmed but have not gone away entirely.

A Concerted Effort

Pregnancy centers have become the target of smear campaigns by those who profit from abortions and activists who claim to support choice. Some states have passed laws impeding the centers’ ability to help pregnant women, and others have tried to bury the centers in paperwork based on unfounded investigations.

President Biden recently proposed a new spending rule that would limit federal funding for pregnancy centers — while abortion giant Planned Parenthood receives more than \$600 million in annual taxpayer funding.

“Pro-life pregnancy centers are facing a concerted effort to stifle and harass them,” says ADF Senior Counsel Kevin Theriot, who has worked to defend pregnancy centers for years.



Maggie, a former Pregnancy Care Center client, with her son. ADF won a Supreme Court victory for the California pregnancy center — and other centers throughout the country — in *NIFLA v. Becerra*.



Heidi Matzke

We've added cameras, armed our staff with pepper spray, and stopped running our mobile clinic because of threats of violence.

“

Heidi Matzke, Executive Director
Alternatives Pregnancy Center

“They're being targeted by pro-abortion government officials and activists because they won't toe the line on abortion. These centers undermine the narrative that abortion is a good thing —that women need abortion to thrive.”

The media also helps fuel hostility toward pregnancy centers. The Associated Press, for example, directs journalists to place the term “crisis pregnancy center” in scare quotes or to use “anti-abortion center” instead.

Efforts to stop or completely upend the work of pregnancy centers are nothing new. For years, ADF has gone to court to protect the centers' rights to do the work they have been called to do — especially as the government has tried to silence them.

In 2018, ADF won a victory for pregnancy centers at the U.S. Supreme Court in *National Institute for Family and Life Advocates (NIFLA) v. Becerra*.

The case involved a California law that forced state-licensed pregnancy centers to offer free advertising for the abortion industry by informing pregnant women that the state offered free or low-cost abortion services. ADF represented NIFLA, a nonprofit network of pregnancy centers around the U.S., to challenge the law.

The Supreme Court overturned the unconstitutional law in June 2018. Justice Clarence Thomas, writing for the majority, held that “the people lose when the government is deciding which ideas should prevail.”

In a similar case, the city of Hartford, Connecticut, passed a law forcing pregnancy centers to post signs announcing, “This facility does not have a licensed medical provider on site to provide or supervise all services.” The compelled notice would have given potential clients the impression that the pregnancy center was offering services that should have been overseen by a licensed provider without proper supervision — which wasn't true. ADF filed a complaint in federal court on behalf of Caring Families Pregnancy Services, challenging the ordinance.

The lawsuit explained that Caring Families had medical personnel on-site for any medical services offered and that many of its services did not require supervision by a licensed medical provider. In July 2020, the city agreed not to enforce the ordinance against Caring Families.



Caring Families Pregnancy Services prevailed against a city law forcing it to post signs with a government-scripted disclaimer.

The Legal Defense

Today, ADF continues to defend pro-life pregnancy centers in court.

In **Vermont**, ADF attorneys represent NIFLA and two pro-life pregnancy centers challenging a state law that censors the ability of pregnancy centers to advertise their services. ADF client Jean Marie Davis can attest to the vital nature of those services. With the support of a pregnancy center, she overcame human trafficking and eventually became the executive director of Branches Pregnancy Center in Brattleboro, Vermont.

“They saved my life,” she says. “I am living proof that pregnancy centers love, serve, and commit ourselves



In 2022, pregnancy centers across the U.S. provided over \$358 million in goods and services.

How Pregnancy Centers Help Women

What Are Pregnancy Centers?

Pregnancy centers serve women who may need support during or after their pregnancy. Through their services, they offer pregnant women and new mothers – who may be feeling alone and hopeless – life-affirming alternatives to abortion and emotional, mental, material, and spiritual support.

What Goods And Services Do Pregnancy Centers Provide?

In 2022, pregnancy centers across the U.S. provided over \$358 million in goods and services, including:

- Free pregnancy-related services, such as ultrasounds, pregnancy tests, STD testing and treatment, and abortion pill reversal
- Support for parents, including parenting and prenatal education classes, job training, and résumé building
- Counseling and mental health services, such as post-abortion support and recovery
- Resources and supplies for new mothers and fathers, including diapers, clothes, car seats, strollers, transportation, food, and housing

to the men, women, and children of our communities who need our help.”

The attorneys general in **Washington** and **New Jersey** have each opened investigations into pregnancy center networks, demanding that they produce thousands of pages of documents – without citing any evidence of wrongdoing.


“There were no complaints to trigger these investigations,” Theriot says. “They are fishing expeditions by the government.”

Investigations like this not only take resources away from the day-to-day operations of pregnancy centers, Theriot says, but they also falsely signal to insurance carriers that the centers are high-risk. “Insurance carriers may be duped into dropping their coverage because of this. And that means that fewer women in need will find help.”

While the Washington attorney general closed his illegal campaign against pregnancy centers in the state after an ADF lawsuit, the New Jersey investigation remains alive.

New York Attorney General Letitia James is suing multiple pregnancy centers and a pro-life group, claiming that the centers are spreading “false and misleading” information about abortion pill reversal. She is seeking to use the courts to punish pregnancy centers for telling women there may be an option to save their baby’s life after beginning the abortion pill’s two-step procedure.

James claims that “abortions cannot be reversed.” However, statistics show that abortion pill reversal has likely saved over 5,000 unborn lives and has a 64-68% success rate. ADF filed a lawsuit against James for censoring the pregnancy centers.

Pregnancy centers are worth fighting for. They provide much-needed care for women and families, and they empower expectant mothers to make life-affirming choices for both themselves and their children. ADF will continue to represent these centers and protect their right to serve women, children, and families in need. 



Jean Marie Davis serves as executive director of Branches Pregnancy Center in Brattleboro, Vermont. Branches is part of an ADF lawsuit challenging a law that censors the ability of pregnancy centers to advertise their services.

Alliance Profile

Joel Oster

'Comedian Of Law'

By Dustin Hobbs

How many attorneys quote John Cleese (best known for his work with British comedy troupe Monty Python) on their website? Joel Oster, a private practice attorney and self-proclaimed "Comedian of Law," might be the only one.

Oster's legal work has ranged from arguing high-profile cases that defend fundamental freedoms to instructing attorneys by analyzing comical courtroom scenes from the 1992 trial film *My Cousin Vinny*.

A Kansas City native, Oster worked as senior legal counsel at Alliance Defending Freedom from 2004 to 2014, working on religious freedom cases like *Town of Greece v. Galloway*, which upheld a town's ability to open its board meetings with a prayer.

He felt convicted that, as Christians, "our opinion should be heard" and that the effort to push religion out of public life was part of a "perverted view of the Constitution" in which religious speech was being treated as second class. In a 2014 victory, the U.S. Supreme Court affirmed that Americans are free to pray according to their beliefs in public meetings.

After leaving ADF to open a law firm in Shawnee, Kansas, Oster continued to work on issues near his heart as an ADF Allied Attorney. In 2022, he successfully defended a seminary against a discrimination claim filed by a former employee who had been terminated after denouncing the Nazarene teaching on sexual morality.

"It seem[ed] outrageous to think you have to hire someone who hates your product," he says.

Oster's victory in *Petty v. Nazarene Theological Seminary* preserves religious institutions' right to hire employees who affirm and promote their beliefs, thereby allowing them to maintain a doctrinally faithful community.

"We have to win this case," he recalls thinking when he began the legal effort on the seminary's behalf. "It seem[ed] like ground zero" for protecting the rights of religious institutions.

In addition to his work to preserve Americans' fundamental freedoms, Oster has also found a practical way to inject comedy into his profession. His firm offers a series of required continuing education courses for attorneys, promoting them as "classes that educate and entertain."

"If you have to do it, you might as well enjoy it!" he tells would-be participants.

Blending his love of history and humor, Oster prompts lively discussions on everything from the power of Abraham Lincoln's vast supply of funny stories to the unintentional comedy found in present-day celebrity trials.

"Comedy breaks down so many doors," he says, noting that it is used in high-profile Supreme Court cases to break tension or make a memorable point.

"I hear some lower court judges say, 'Oh, we shouldn't bring laughter into our [court]. There's no room in the law for laughter.' Well, no one told that to Chief Justice John Roberts, because every day [the justices] are laughing."

For Oster, who takes his attorney-turned-comedian act to comedy clubs on occasion, laughter is more than a rhetorical device clever attorneys can utilize; it's part of God's created design.

Laughter, he says, is "our preferred state of being. We would all rather laugh than not laugh." **A**

Joel Oster

Comedy breaks down so many doors.

“

Joel Oster





Cover Story

Teed Off

A School Moves To Silence A Student's
Quiet Objection To Gender Ideology

By Chris Potts

It may have been on the school bus that the idea first took root in Liam Morrison's mind.

You can think about a lot of things on those short rides, surrounded by an unpredictable sampling of your peers. There's so much you can't help seeing, or hearing, amid those rows of worn, vinyl seats.

What Liam heard and saw one morning was a couple of fellow students who were opting to identify as transgender. Liam had been curious about this idea for a while now, wondering what might prompt people to think about gender this way. So, he politely asked these two some questions, made some observations. What came out of that, over the next few days, was an on-again, off-again conversation between Liam and the duo.

The conversations confirmed to Liam that he thought about gender in a very different way. Which made him all the more conscious of something he'd been noticing for a while: that a different set of views

about gender was being promoted around his middle school campus. Pride flags, posters, subtle and not-so-subtle urgings to celebrate one view: that gender is a limitless spectrum defined only by each person's self-identification.

That emphasis on one particular point of view troubled Liam, for several reasons. One, of course,

was that it was a point of view he disagreed with. Two, it was a point of view that he felt was being pressed on himself and his peers in the name of education — when, if anything, it seemed a lot more about politics. And third, it was a point of view that, from what he was learning, could eventually lead kids his age into dangerous and irreversible medical procedures.

**I don't complain when I see
Pride flags ... hung throughout
the school ... others have a right
to their beliefs, just as I do.**

“

Liam Morrison



Liam draws inspiration from two primary sources: his father's probing questions and what he reads to feed his considerable curiosity.



That's a lot for a 12-year-old to be thinking about — but Liam is nothing if not a thinker. And the more he thought, the more it began to weigh on him that maybe he should say something. That other voices really needed to be heard on this issue.

And that maybe one of those voices should be his. That's when he decided to look for a T-shirt.

Liam has spent all 14 years of his life in Middleborough, Massachusetts — established in 1669, population 24,000, and the self-proclaimed Cranberry Capital of the World. (Ocean Spray Cranberries is headquartered in the town.) Over the last few years, he attended Nichols Middle School, where he liked most of

I'd like people to see that they can speak up about different issues. You can share your views. And you shouldn't be afraid.

“

Liam Morrison

his courses, but particularly science (“the most energizing class,” he says). He had his own circle of friends on campus and a reputation as an excellent student who consistently made the honor roll.

If school gives him a lot to think about, he credits his dad, Chris, with teaching him *how* to think ... albeit through some rather unconventional lessons.

“When I was younger — when I was a lot more gullible — he would tell me these absurd stories and let me come to my own conclusions on whether or not they were true,” Liam says. Stories, for instance, about the time Chris ran in the Boston Marathon (“he’s not the type,” his son decided) or climbed Mount Everest — in one day.

At the time, Liam says, he believed that last one, “because he’s my father — this big, mighty being.” But on reflection, young Liam dismissed that story, too. “He’s not the guy that’s capable of that.”

Along with the tall tales, though, Chris took the time to point out interesting things in the news and made a point, around the dinner table, of challenging

We've tried to teach Liam to think for himself. That just because adults and educators say this doesn't make it right.

“

Chris Morrison

the family for their thoughts on current events. “That eventually developed into me being able to form my own opinions,” Liam says.

Liam formed them at school, too. By the time he entered sixth grade, he and his friends began to notice a growing promotion of particular ideas about gender and sexuality around campus. A poster in the guidance counselor's office, showing gender as a spectrum of possibilities rather than just two. Pride flags. Pride Month activities. Students invited to wear clothing to celebrate these ideas.

“They've definitely taken their position,” Liam says. “It's not always discussed, but it's known amongst the students. That it's what people who run the school want us to think — and what they think themselves.”

But it wasn't, Liam decided, what he thought. And — having been encouraged not just to think for himself but to speak those thoughts when appropriate — the then-12-year-old began to wonder if it might be about time to express, out loud, a different point of view than the one being pushed on campus.

The conversations on the school bus convinced him the time had come.

He talked with his dad about how he was feeling. “I wish there was a good T-shirt,” he said. His dad found one online with a message that seemed to make Liam's point.

“There are only two genders,” the shirt read.

Liam asked his dad if he could wear it to school. “I didn't think it would be a big deal,” he says.

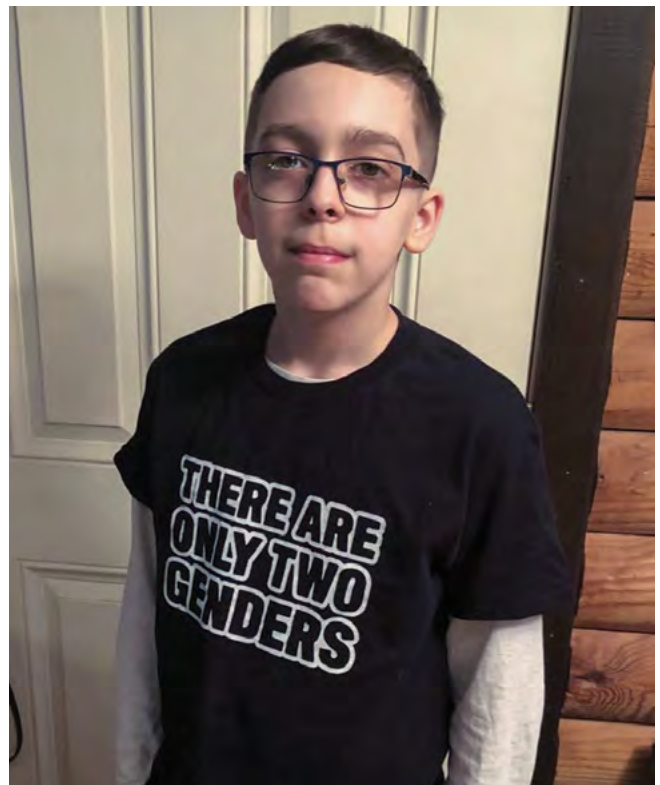
Liam's dad and stepmom wondered. They faced the same mixed feelings every parent faces if their child decides to stand up and speak up for what he believes: a certain amount of pride, and a certain amount of hesitation.

“I do not like to be the center of attention,” Chris says. “But it was up to him. He's a good kid. Respectful. Kind. And he thinks for himself. It was his idea. We just let him kind of roll with it.”

The rollout didn't get far. His first-period P.E. class had barely begun when the principal showed up and motioned for Liam to follow her. “People are complaining,” she said. “They're upset.”

In the school office, she and the guidance counselor asked Liam to take off the shirt. As he explained his reasons for wearing it, the adults seemed ill at ease. But neither could tell him exactly who or how many had complained about his shirt, and he soon decided, “I didn't want to back down.”

“I just felt that taking off the shirt was unnecessary,” he says, and that ordering him to do so was “not something they had the power to do.” Finally, they gave him an ultimatum: sit in a room alone all day or call his folks to come get him. Liam chose the latter.



Liam was a 12-year-old seventh grader when his school ordered him to take off his “There are only two genders” T-shirt.

His parents came, but their conversation with the principal went nowhere; she wouldn't detail any of the complaints for them, either. She just told them Liam was violating school policy. If she thought his parents would be concerned that others disagreed with Liam's decision to wear the shirt, she was disappointed.

"We were very proud of him," says Sue, Liam's stepmom. "He was standing up for himself. He's a remarkable young man."

On the way home, they offered to take Liam for pizza. He thought he'd better finish his homework first.

The next day, Liam's fellow students had plenty of comments — all supporting what he'd done. Some had never said

anything about the subject before. "I think seeing someone else do it just made them feel like they had the ability to say something about it themselves," he says.

Chris sent an email to the district superintendent, questioning the principal's decision. "There was nothing about [Liam's] shirt that was directed to any particular person," he wrote. "It simply stated his view on a subject that has become a political hot topic."

The superintendent replied, supporting the principal — whose actions, it turned out, were based on one teacher's complaint.

A school board meeting was scheduled for the following week. Liam got to thinking that might be a place to explain to the superintendent and others in authority why he'd done what he'd done. He and his

parents began brainstorming ideas. He practiced what he wanted to say.

The night of the meeting, Liam was nervous, he remembers, but he said his piece, before an audience that included a good-sized group of family and friends — including his mom, Christie, who was on hand with plenty of representatives from her side of the family.

"Christie and her side of the family have been a great source of support and encouragement to Liam through all of this," Sue says, gratefully.

"What did my shirt say?" Liam asked the board. "Five simple words. 'There are only two genders.' Nothing harmful, nothing threatening. Just a statement I believe to be a fact.

"I've been told that my shirt was targeting a protected

One reason [these abuses have] become so prevalent is silence. Parents need to be willing to talk to school officials and say, 'This is unacceptable.'

“

Logan Spena, ADF Legal Counsel



Liam and his parents were overwhelmed by the letters, T-shirts, and other items he received in an outpouring of support after his case became public.

class. Who is this ‘protected class?’ Are their feelings more important than my rights? I don’t complain when I see Pride flags and diversity posters hung throughout the school. Do you know why? Because others have a right to their beliefs, just as I do.

“Not one person — staff or student — told me that they were bothered by what I was wearing.”

“Liam wasn’t chasing trouble,” says his aunt, Julie Hamblin, who was there that night. “He was making a statement. It blew us all away ... just how confident he was, and well-spoken. We were all looking at each other: ‘This is little Liam?’”

Family and friends cheered; board members made no comment. But someone recorded Liam’s speech and posted it online. It quickly went viral. Overnight, requests for interviews began to come in. So did support, from all over the country: letters, T-shirts, money, gift cards, books.

An acquaintance put Sue in contact with attorneys with the Massachusetts Family Institute (MFI), who offered to send a letter to the school demanding they let Liam wear his shirt. The school’s attorney replied; the answer was still “no.”

So, the next day, Liam wore his T-shirt again, but this time he covered two of the original words with a piece of tape. On the tape, he stenciled the word “censored,” so the modified shirt now read, “There are censored genders.” That one didn’t last five minutes. He’d barely sat down at his desk before an administrator summoned him back to the office. This time — not wanting to miss more school — Liam took the shirt off.

Clearly, the school had no respect for Liam’s First Amendment free speech protections. The time had come for more serious action. The Morrises enlisted Alliance Defending Freedom to come alongside MFI and help.

Filing a federal lawsuit can be a daunting proposition, and the decision wasn’t easy for the Morrises. In the end, they left the final choice to Liam.

“We had agreed that [as long as] he was good with it, we would pursue it,” Chris says. “We didn’t want to put him in a position where he’s not comfortable.”

“All along, we’d been saying, ‘We’ll stop this anytime you want,’” Sue says. “But he’s determined.” When it came time to sign on for the lawsuit, Liam’s parents looked at him. “We sign this,” they said, “you’re in it.”



Liam with his legal team: (from left) attorney Sam Whiting of the Massachusetts Family Institute and ADF attorneys Rory Gray, Tyson Langhofer, David Cortman, and Logan Spena.

Liam said, “Let’s do it.”

“If we’d let this slide,” he says, “it would seem like I was willing to let someone tell me what I could and couldn’t say. That’s against the entire reason the United States was made — it would go against our core values.”

ADF attorneys asked a Massachusetts district court for a temporary restraining order and a preliminary injunction, either of which would have compelled the school to let Liam wear his shirt. A federal judge declined both requests.

In a previous case, says Logan Spena, legal counsel with the ADF Center for Academic Freedom, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that school districts can limit student speech only if it “materially disrupts classwork or involves substantial disorder or invasion of the rights of others (*Tinker v. Des Moines*, 1969).” The key question, Spena says, is whether Liam’s speech actually had that effect.

But, since very few students or staff actually saw Liam's shirt, he says, the school can't point to any actual disruption to justify silencing Liam. And the school's prediction that some disruption might have occurred in the future was rooted in viewpoint discrimination.

In other words, he says, "Other students are encouraged to express views about gender that contradict Liam's, but Liam can't say what he believes."

ADF attorneys appealed the lower court's decision to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 1st Circuit, where judges heard arguments in February. In June, that court affirmed the decision of the lower court. ADF is likely to appeal the decision.

This is the very thing the First Amendment was designed to protect against. The government does not get to choose which viewpoints are heard and which are not.

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Tyson Langhofer, ADF Senior Legal Counsel

Ultimately, "We are optimistic," Spena says, "since the administrators' actions constitute a fairly remarkable expansion of schools' authority to limit student speech — on any issue."

Liam's "speech," he says, "was peaceful and respectful. He simply disagreed with an issue that the school already speaks on itself ... and already permits other students to speak on. That's pretty remarkable censorship."

"Clearly," he says, "the administration was only hostile to his point of view."

"Unfortunately, Liam's school is no outlier," says Tyson Langhofer, ADF senior counsel and director

Liam and his mother, Christie, leave the courthouse after arguments at the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 1st Circuit in Boston on Feb. 8.

of the ADF Center for Academic Freedom. "Schools throughout the country have shifted much of their focus from educating kids to indoctrinating kids with the educators' preferred positions on controversial social issues. And many schools take things a step further.

"If a student, like Liam, expresses an opinion different than the school's preferred message, the school attempts to censor the message by punishing the student." That's not only unfair to the young people, Langhofer says — it violates the First Amendment.

"This is the very thing the First Amendment was designed to protect against," he says. "The government does not get to choose which viewpoints are heard and which are not."

"Schools should be encouraging their students to engage in civil dialogue on important issues. Instead, they're sending a message that the way to deal with views you disagree with is to ask the government to shut them down."

While many understand that public schools are increasingly promoting an aggressive sexual agenda, Spena says, "parents often don't perceive the extent to which that's going on right under their own nose, in their own school." And that, to many of those pushing these things, "any dissent from their view is mischaracterized as inherently hateful and intolerant."

"One reason that's become so prevalent," Spena





Liam with his stepmother, Sue, who has supported his determined efforts to stand for free speech. “He’s a remarkable young man,” she says.

says, “is silence. Parents need to be willing to talk to school officials and say, ‘This is unacceptable.’” The results, he says, can be far-reaching.

“Hearing other people express a contrary view could be incredibly important to a person who might otherwise be overwhelmed by pervasive ideology,” Spena says. Parents — and in some cases, even children — “can really affect their peers.”

“It’s not right that kids should have to do this,” Sue says. “But here we are. They’re the ones in the middle of it. If more people would follow Liam’s example, we wouldn’t be in this mess.”

Liam says he’s just hoping his example makes a difference. “I’d like people to see that they can speak up about different issues. You can share your views. And you shouldn’t be afraid.”

“**T**his has brought us closer together as a family,” Sue says. “It’s shown us how important it is for us to talk to our kids about these things.” Liam says that goes both ways.

“I’ve learned that my parents are very supportive,” he says.

“We’ve tried to teach Liam to think for himself,” Chris says. “That just because adults and educators say this doesn’t make it right.” He pauses, marveling. “He’s actually thanked us for raising him right.”

This has brought us closer together as a family. It’s shown us how important it is for us to talk to our kids about these things.

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Sue Morrison

The Morrisons have seen changes in their son, these last two years. “Sometimes, we look at each other and say, ‘What have we created?’” Chris laughs. “Liam was always such a quiet kid.”

“I have seen Liam’s confidence grow throughout this process,” Langhofer says. “He has seen that speaking up can be difficult and may come with consequences. But I think he’s also learned that the benefits of speaking up and taking a stand far outweigh the downsides. I know his courage has inspired many others to do the same.”

Liam has too much on his mind to dwell for long on the changes in his life. He starts high school this fall at a local agricultural school. He hopes, he says, to become a blacksmith.

He ought to be pretty good at that. Iron, they say, sharpens iron. **A**



David Phillips

My View

I Stood Up To Radical Ideology In The Classroom

By David Phillips

I didn't choose the academic life as much as it chose me. Growing up, I loved being in the classroom because I was blessed with remarkable teachers. They kindled a passion for learning in me, and I wanted to share the educational experience they gave me. By the time I finished college, I knew I wanted to spend the rest of my life teaching.

I find it rewarding to discuss topics I'm passionate about with my students. But teaching involves more than that. It's my job to equip students with the knowledge and skills they need to grow and succeed. That includes teaching them to think for themselves and respectfully engage with a broad range of views — especially views they might disagree with.

I never dreamed I would be fired while simply doing my job.

For eight years, I taught at the North Carolina Governor's School, a residential summer program for the state's most talented rising high school seniors. As a Governor's School alumnus, I have a particular love for the program. It is billed as a learning environment that helps students “explore and ask questions” and develop “their own perspectives with new insights.”

Over the years, though, I saw that environment change. The school began to embrace critical theory, a radical ideology that views everyone through the lens of characteristics like race, sex, gender identity, and religion. Based on these characteristics alone, certain people are labeled as “privileged” while others are labeled as “oppressed.”

“Privileged” characteristics include being white, male, heterosexual, or Christian. I began to hear from students with those characteristics who were harassed and silenced in class. One student told me that every time she expressed a Christian point of view in class, she was immediately told her views were bigoted.

It was no secret that progressive philosophies dominated the curriculum. I learned that the school's ideological “orthodoxy” bothered not only many students but also some faculty members — even those who described themselves as liberal.

As a teacher, I found the lack of viewpoint diversity at the Governors' School alarming, and not just

because I held different political views. Presenting students with one “acceptable” view while squelching others betrays the school’s founding principles and the entire purpose of education.

For years, I’d provided an open and engaging classroom where we respectfully debated ideas. My approach had been welcomed. Students who had been shut down in other classes appreciated the opportunity to speak their minds in my classes and optional seminars. Those who disagreed with me had the opportunity to voice their opinions, and they learned to sharpen their arguments for their views.

“I want you to know that I don’t agree with you,” many students told me, “but I respect you. Thank you for saying what you did.”

But when conversations about identity politics swept across the nation in 2021, it became more difficult to maintain a civil environment on campus. That summer, I offered a series of optional seminars with alternative takes on critical theory and other ideologies — seminars that I had given in previous years without complaint.

Though I presented the material respectfully, a group of staff and students openly rebuked me, referencing my “privileged” characteristics as a white Christian male. Despite their hostility, I stayed long after each lecture ended to engage with each student who had a question and responded calmly to each one.

But the day after my third lecture, I was fired with no warning or explanation.

I had always received positive performance evaluations

at the Governor’s School. I had taught students to ask questions at a school where the unofficial motto has long been “Question everything.” But it was clear I’d been fired because of the views I had expressed. Anyone can see the irony there.

I filed a lawsuit against the school through my attorneys at Alliance Defending Freedom, even though I was very afraid of the consequences of taking the school to court. I was concerned that if I told my story, people might assume I had done something to deserve the school’s retaliation.

In fact, a school official I’d never met published false rumors about me to convince others of just that.

But I knew I needed to take a stand. What happened to me is just one symptom of the state of free speech on America’s campuses. That

unhealthy environment cannot improve unless people stand up against it. With the help of ADF, I had the opportunity to rise to the challenge.

Thankfully, my lawsuit prompted the Governor’s School to adopt a policy that respects viewpoint diversity on campus. The school’s renewed commitment to free speech is important for the students it serves. Whether those students are on the political right, the political left, or somewhere in between, it’s unfair to deprive them of the opportunity to hear different perspectives.

I hope the victory in my case will encourage other schools — and other teachers — to give the next generation of leaders an environment that encourages them to think for themselves. **A**

I never dreamed I would be fired while simply doing my job.

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David Phillips

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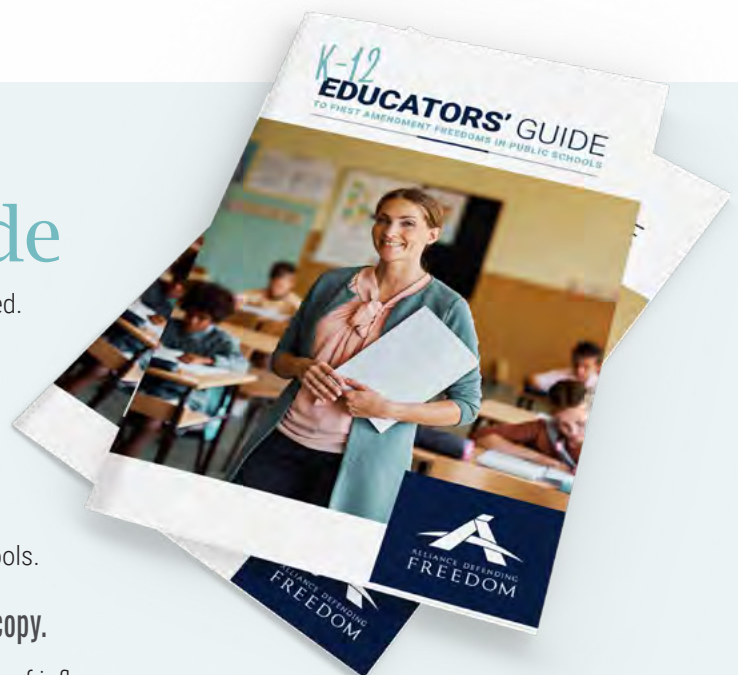
K-12 Educators’ Guide

The freedoms of educators and students are increasingly threatened. Government officials are silencing speech they disagree with and punishing Americans for engaging in honest discussion and debate.

Some policies seek to compel educators or students to express messages that aren’t true. But don’t educators and students have the right to live and speak the truth — without fear of punishment? The K-12 Educators’ Guide was created to help educators, parents, and students understand their First Amendment rights in K-12 schools.

| VISIT ADFLegal.org/Support/K-12-Guide to download a free copy.

Please share the guide with teachers and parents within your sphere of influence.





Q & A

Mary Margaret Olohan

By Maureen Collins Comer

Mary Margaret Olohan is a senior reporter at The Daily Signal, where she covers the cultural and political stories of the moment through video and print journalism. She previously reported for The Daily Caller and The Daily Wire and presented at this year's Alliance Defending Freedom Journalism Academy for aspiring journalists.

Her work focuses on the protection of children's innocence; the struggles of women to maintain the integrity of their sports and spaces; the issue of abortion and the protection of the unborn; and the coronavirus pandemic's effect on children, service members, businesses, and the livelihoods of everyday Americans.

She is also the author of *Detrans: True Stories of Escaping the Gender Ideology Cult*, released in May.

Olohan is a graduate of The Catholic University of America and is proud to be the oldest daughter in an Irish Catholic family of 11 children.

F&J: Your writing focuses heavily on cultural issues. What makes you passionate about those areas?

MMO: I'm the most passionate about abortion, marriage and family, and religious freedom. At the end of the day, a lot of the political topics we talk about in D.C. don't really matter if we cannot protect the lives of our children or our children's innocence.

I grew up in a really big family and was homeschooled. We are very serious about our Catholic faith. So, when it came time to pick a beat, I instantly gravitated toward the culture beat because I always cared about these issues. I was aware growing up that there were families that were targeted for homeschooling. My mom would share stories about the ways in which public

These young people are lured into gender ideology through affirmation, lies, and manipulation.

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Mary Margaret Olohan

schools sought to subvert parental views on religion and traditional families. As a new reporter, I did a lot of reporting on the ACLU and their attempts to subvert education in California.

And the abortion beat is one I was always drawn to because when I first started, I couldn't find any other conservative reporters who were just telling the news and not using the euphemisms of organizations like NARAL (National Abortion Rights Action League). So, I had a lot of success sharing the stories of the unborn which I attribute to the fact that there was no one else doing it. I was grateful to share those stories and to cover some really historic things that happened over the past several years.

F&J: You spoke at ADF's Journalism Academy about the significance of international news. Why do you believe it's important for American Christians to know and understand what's happening overseas?

MMO: A lot of the time we will see where trends in the United States are heading. But also, it's so important that we know what's going on with our brothers and sisters in Christ around the world. When we see [U.K. pro-life volunteer] Isabel Vaughan-Spruce arrested outside an abortion clinic for praying silently in her head, we shouldn't think, "I cannot believe that is happening there." We should think, "That will be happening here next."

F&J: Talk about your book. What is the "gender identity cult," and what inspired you to write about young people who've escaped it?

MMO: I was inspired to write this book after I started learning the stories of detransitioners—young people who tried to become another gender and then realized that that is impossible. There was a night when I joined a Twitter Spaces event where a bunch of different people were sharing their stories of hormonal transition. These young people are lured into gender ideology through affirmation, lies, and manipulation. Then when they realize that they can never transition and when they try to talk about it, they're gaslit, thrown out, and told that they never truly belonged.

I was just blown away by these stories, and I knew then that I wanted to do something big on [them]

because I thought they were so underreported. A lot of the time [activists] will try to dismiss these stories, citing faulty statistics that very few people regret their transitions. And that's not true. So, I wanted to tell their stories in as clear-cut a way as possible. I think [they] are the best weapon against this ideological cult.

F&J: Is there a story you tell in the book that particularly impacted you?

MMO: There are many stories that impacted me personally. This was an emotional book, given that I spent hours and hours on the phone with detransitioners. One particular story that had an impact was what a detransitioner named Prisha shared with me.

Prisha underwent a double mastectomy. She also went on testosterone. One of the things that propelled her to transition is that she was raped when she was a teenager. She was also deeply anorexic, and Prisha shared with me that she became pregnant and because she was anorexic, her body could not carry the baby.

Something about that story just absolutely makes me sad every time I think about it, and it hurts my heart that she had to go through that horrific experience.

That is what pushed her down the path to transition.

F&J: What efforts do you see in today's culture to counter the push for teens to "transition"? What gives you hope?

MMO: We've seen lawsuits and laws all over the country that are pushing back on this. For example, the SAFE Act tries to protect kids from transgender surgeries, hormones, and puberty blockers. ADF's lawsuits have also been fun for me to cover because they're usually very high-profile cases and they give the public a very good glimpse into how schools are handling this.

Harmeet Dhillon is an attorney representing a whole bunch of detransitioners against the medical providers who did this to them. And there is [former University of Kentucky swimmer] Riley Gaines and other high-profile advocates of protecting women's spaces and combating gender ideology at large. I am very hopeful; we've seen a massive resurgence in our response to gender ideology. I'm excited to see what the next year brings. 🦋

Mary Margaret's book Detrans: True Stories of Escaping the Gender Ideology Cult is available through major booksellers.





Opinion

How ADF International Foiled A Major Censorship Effort

By Paul Coleman

When I was invited to participate in the National Conservatism Conference (or “NatCon”) in Brussels this spring, I expected it to be a routine speaking engagement. The mainstream conservative gathering had been held in Brussels before, as well as in London, Miami, Rome, and Washington, DC.

I soon discovered that there was nothing routine about this event.

Leading up to the two-day conference, two venues canceled the event on short notice due to political pressure before a third venue was secured. Despite facing significant pressure and even direct threats against him, the owner of the third venue refused to bow down. That’s when the real drama began.

Around lunchtime on Day 1, police besieged the venue and tried to shut down the event on the orders of the municipal mayor. In a four-page decree, the mayor justified his actions in part because NatCon platformed “ethically conservative” views (which he described as “hostility to legalized abortion, same-sex unions, etc.”).

The hours that followed were surreal. For reasons not entirely clear, the police allowed the event to continue, but people could not enter. Those who were already on the inside could leave but not return, and those on the outside stood in the rain trying to make sense of it all.

As global media began reporting on the scene, the actions of the mayor and police roused something of



Under a mayor’s orders, police block the entrance to the National Conservatism Conference in Brussels.

an international diplomatic incident. A spokesman for U.K. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak criticized the attempted censorship, as did the Hungarian and Italian prime ministers and an American senator who reportedly drafted a letter to the Belgian ambassador to the U.S.

While such solidarity was welcome, it could not overturn the mayor's decree.

With the event in jeopardy, ADF International — where I serve as executive director — was asked to provide legal support to the conference organizers to oppose this blatant censorship attempt. Since I was not allowed to join my colleague, Belgian lawyer Jean-Paul Van de Walle, inside the venue, the legal action was in part coordinated in its early stages through a wall of police.

With the efforts of Van de Walle and our network of local lawyers, we worked around the clock to lead an emergency legal challenge to the censorship effort. At 2:30 a.m., just hours before the doors were due to open for Day 2 of the conference, Belgium's supreme administrative court issued a favorable ruling that allowed the event to go ahead without police interference.

My first meeting after arriving at the venue was a friendly sit-down with police leaders to discuss security arrangements for the day — the same police that had blocked my entry less than 24 hours earlier.

Rarely in my legal career have I witnessed the importance of the rule of law and a well-functioning judiciary so starkly. It is reassuring that the Belgian legal system held strong against a tidal wave of pressure and upheld the basic freedoms of speech and assembly. Much credit must be given to a court system prepared to hear a case at 10 p.m. and issue a lengthy written decision in the middle of the night.

But it is shocking that

a massive legal effort was needed to allow this peaceful conference to proceed, and serious questions still need to be answered. Among them: What is stopping a similar set of circumstances from unfolding the next time an event takes place that the cancel-culture mob does not like?

Attacks on free speech are happening all over Europe. In Finland, for example, ADF International is defending Member of Parliament Päivi Räsänen against charges of "hate speech" for posting a Bible verse.

Although Päivi has twice been unanimously acquitted of any wrongdoing in lower courts, she will now stand trial a third time for her Bible-verse tweet, now at the Finnish Supreme Court. *(Read more on p. 4.)*

At the same time, the court ruling in Brussels demonstrates that government officials are not immune from the law. ADF International will continue working to advance freedom

for all people in Europe and around the world who simply want to speak what they believe. **A**

This was adapted from an article that appeared in The Spectator on April 18, 2024.

It is shocking that a massive legal effort was needed to allow this peaceful conference to proceed.

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Paul Coleman



Paul Coleman (left) and Jean-Paul Van de Walle at NatCon, after a ruling by Belgium's supreme administrative court allowed the event to proceed.

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