

FAITH & JUSTICE

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One Conversation at a Time

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Minutes With Kristen

Remembering Dr. James Dobson

By Kristen Waggoner, CEO, President & Chief Counsel

In August, Alliance Defending Freedom joined Christians across America in mourning the passing of Dr. James Dobson.

We greatly rejoice in the life he lived and the many important cultural and spiritual movements he authored. He is best known as the founder of the highly influential Focus on the Family ministry, but he also served as a former advisor to five U.S. presidents. And, most near and dear to our hearts at ADF, his leadership played a crucial role in establishing this ministry.

On Jan. 31, 1994, Dr. Dobson joined five other visionary leaders — Bill Bright, Marlin Maddoux, D. James Kennedy, Larry Burkett, and William Pew — in launching the Alliance Defense Fund, which eventually became Alliance Defending Freedom. Dr. Dobson had served with ADF founder Alan Sears on the U.S. Attorney General's Commission on Pornography in 1986, which led to him being a central figure in calling Alan to serve as CEO, president, and general counsel of ADF — a position he held for 26 years.

Without Dr. Dobson in the early years of ADF's formation, it's unlikely our ministry would be where we are today.

“

Kristen Waggoner

When ADF celebrated its 25th anniversary in 2018, Dr. Dobson offered this remembrance:

“Prior to the founding of ADF, the ACLU was running roughshod over Christian schools, businesses, and families. When I heard that my friend Alan Sears was willing to help us start a new organization to defend Christians, I immediately contacted him and asked if I could help. It was one of the best decisions I have made in 42 years of ministry. I thank the Lord for the accomplishments of ADF to this day, and I shudder to think where this nation would be without it.”



Dr. James Dobson (right) with Alan Sears

As Alan has stated many times, without Dr. Dobson in the early years of ADF's formation, it's unlikely our ministry would be where we are today. Our anchor verse, John 15:5, was adopted because of the influence of Focus on the Family, and it so well encapsulates the way Dr. Dobson lived his life — fully abiding in Christ and fully understanding that, apart from Him, we can do nothing.

ADF is the beneficiary of Dr. Dobson's tenacious efforts to speak truth into a culture that was in moral and spiritual decay. He believed the family is foundational to human flourishing, and he inspired many to live and speak the truth. He also planted many seeds that started ministry movements of which we're a part today — contending for the protection of life, marriage, family, free speech, and religious liberty the way God intended.

Dr. Dobson was a model of obedience and dedication to his calling. His life and legacy of faith have shaped ours, and I am eternally grateful. **A**

News & Quick Takes

Case Updates From Around The World

Massachusetts

Two Christian couples are suing state officials after learning they are no longer eligible to serve as foster parents because of their religious beliefs. The state now requires foster parents to promise that they will support a child's desire to identify as the opposite sex, even if doing so violates their faith.

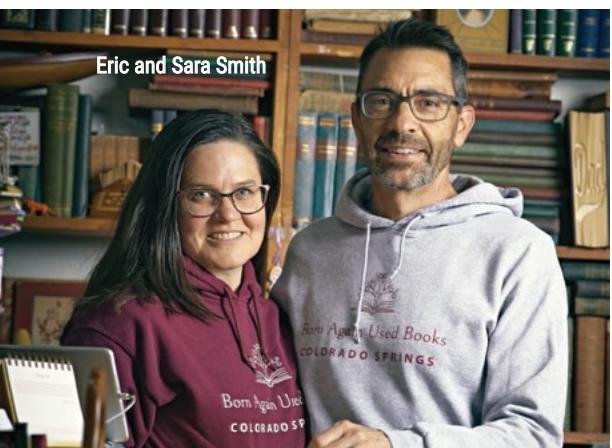
Greg and Marianelly Schrock have cared for 28 foster children since 2019, motivated by biblical teaching to care for orphans and widows. Nick and Audrey Jones have cared for seven foster children since 2023. Under the new policy, the state could remove from their home a toddler they have fostered since infancy. ADF is representing the couples in the lawsuit.

The state has more than 1,400 children waiting to be placed with a family, even as it excludes foster parents because of their faith.

Massachusetts is putting its ideological agenda ahead of the needs of these suffering kids.

“

Johannes Widmalm-Delphonse, ADF Senior Counsel



Eric and Sara Smith



Virginia

Three Virginia students are challenging state policies that exclude them from college grants because they chose certain religious majors.

ADF attorneys filed a lawsuit on behalf of Cameron Johnson, Luke Thomas, and Trace Stevens, all of whom are pursuing degrees at Liberty University.



Nick and Audrey Jones

At the time the complaint was filed, Johnson planned to major in Pastoral Leadership. Thomas was preparing to pursue a degree in Music and Worship. Stevens was already a Liberty student, majoring in Religion. A member of the Virginia Army National Guard, Stevens planned to use his degree to become a military chaplain. He had joined the National Guard primarily because a recruiter told him that he would be able to use a National Guard grant to help him pay for a religiously oriented college degree.

The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled three times in the last eight years that generally available public benefits cannot be withheld from people because of their religious character, exercise, or use of the benefits.

Colorado

ADF attorneys have filed a lawsuit on behalf of a Christian bookstore in Colorado Springs seeking to uphold its religious and commonsense beliefs about biological sex.

Born Again Used Books is challenging a state law that recently redefined "gender expression" to include "how an individual chooses to be addressed." Under the new law, Colorado requires store employees to use pronouns and titles based on gender identity rather than biological reality.

Bookstore owner Eric Smith and his wife, Sara, believe that God creates each individual either male or female and that sex cannot be chosen or changed. Because of that, employees only use biologically accurate language when referring to customers, coworkers, and others. A law that forces them to do otherwise violates the First Amendment.

"Born Again Used Books shouldn't have to choose between violating the law and speaking consistent with its Christian beliefs," said Hal Frampton, ADF senior counsel and director of the ADF Center for Conscience Initiatives.

My case is evidence of the severe free speech crisis in the U.K., which has ... even attracted expressions of alarm from the United States.

“

Pastor Dia Moodley

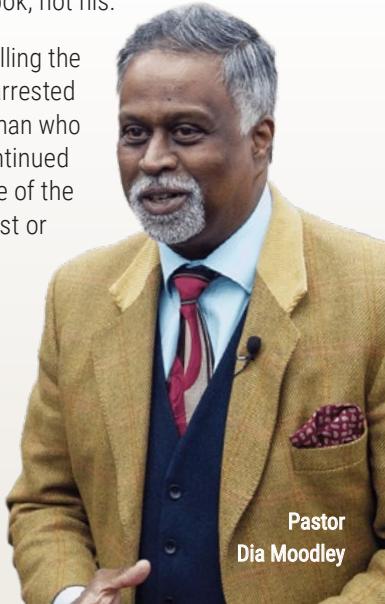
United Kingdom

Police threatened to arrest a Christian pastor for peaceful preaching after he was assaulted by Muslim bystanders in the city of Bristol.

Pastor Dia Moodley was preaching about the differences between Christianity and Islam while holding a Quran. As a crowd gathered, a Muslim man threatened to stab him and others pushed him off his ladder, pinned him to the floor, and claimed the Quran was their book, not his.

Police officers responded by telling the pastor twice that he would be arrested for “breaching the peace.” The man who had threatened to stab him continued to make threats in the presence of the officers, but police did not arrest or question him at the scene.

With the support of ADF International, Pastor Moodley filed a complaint concerning the police’s treatment of him and their failure to promptly investigate serious crimes against him.



Pastor
Dia Moodley

Germany

Berlin pharmacist Andreas Kersten has been forced to end his practice because he refused to sell the “morning-after pill” for reasons of conscience.

A Berlin administrative court acquitted Kersten after the Chamber of Pharmacists accused him of professional misconduct. But the presiding judge ruled that the duty to provide drugs overrides the freedom of

conscience – a stance at odds with international human rights law. He noted that a pharmacist who could not reconcile sales with his conscience would have to give up the profession.

“I became a pharmacist to promote health, even to save lives,” Kersten said. “I cannot reconcile selling the so-called ‘morning-after pill’ with my conscience because of the potential to end a human life.”



United Kingdom

ADF International hosted its inaugural Areté Academy Commonwealth in September. Held in London, the five-day academy brought together Christian law students and other young professionals from Commonwealth countries including the U.K., Canada, and Australia.

Areté is ADF International’s premier training program, designed to equip the next generation of leaders to take up positions of influence in law, public policy, government, and academia. The introduction of the newest academy is part of a broad effort to expand ADF International’s reach across the Commonwealth.

Areté is also offered annually in Europe and Latin America. This year, 138 delegates from 45 countries received training through the three academies.

**This is the type of academy that
won’t just be a one-week ... experience.
This will set the foundation for the
rest of your professional life.**

“

Areté Commonwealth Delegate



Andreas Kersten

Special Feature

10 Highlights Your Support Has Made Possible In 2025

Thank you for partnering with Alliance Defending Freedom to advance the God-given right of all to live and speak the truth. Following is a glimpse of the vital work your prayers and support have made possible this year.

1 Supreme Court Agrees to Hear 4 ADF Cases

In the first half of the year, the U.S. Supreme Court agreed to hear four of five cases ADF presented to the court during that time — an 80% success rate.

The court typically hears less than 1% of the cases presented to it. The cases address fairness in women's sports, free speech for counselors, and the protection of donor identities. Visit [ADFLegal.org/cases](https://www.adflegal.org/cases) to learn more.

2 Ending a School District's Pronoun Mandate

Following a circuit court ruling, Virginia's Loudoun County School Board no longer requires teachers to use pronouns inconsistent with students' sex. In 2021, the school district adopted a policy focused on the "rights" of children with gender dysphoria, which officials interpreted as requiring teachers to use students' chosen pronouns. ADF attorneys represented high school teacher Monica Gill in a lawsuit challenging the policy. After the Supreme Court of Virginia ruled in favor of a teacher challenging a similar policy in another ADF case, Loudoun County officials agreed that their policy could not be used to compel pronoun use.



Monica Gill

4 Protecting a Mom From Unjust Adoption Rule

Three years ago, Oregon mother Jessica Bates applied to adopt children out of foster care — a calling she felt following the death of her husband in 2017. She particularly hoped to adopt a sibling pair to add to her family of five children, but the state denied Jessica's application because of her biblical beliefs about sexuality. She said she would not agree to the state's gender-ideology requirements such as using inaccurate pronouns to refer to a child or taking children to pride parades. ADF filed a lawsuit on her behalf, and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit ruled in her favor in July.



Emilee Carpenter

3 Protecting a Christian Photographer's Free Speech

ADF attorneys reached a court-approved settlement protecting Emilee Carpenter, a Christian photographer and blogger, from being forced to express messages that violate her beliefs. Under New York state law, Emilee would be forced to create photographs and blogs celebrating same-sex weddings if she did so for weddings between one man and one woman. The court ruled that New York officials cannot compel Emilee to create photos that contradict her faith and ordered the state to pay \$225,000 in attorneys' fees.



Jessica Bates

5 Defending a Christian Camp's Religious Freedom

Colorado pulled back from forcing a Christian camp to let boys into girls' showers or dorms, just one month after ADF filed a lawsuit on the camp's behalf. The lawsuit challenged a policy update that forced licensed resident camps to allow campers to use the private facilities of the opposite sex. Camp IdRaHaJe is now free to operate according to its religious beliefs. The camp is one of 4,306 members of ADF's Church and Ministry Alliance, which provides legal counsel and resources to ensure that churches and ministries are free to operate consistent with God's call.



South Carolina Governor Henry McMaster (second from left) with members of ADF's legal team.

8 Freeing States to Direct Tax Dollars Away From Abortion Industry

Should American taxpayers be forced to fund abortion? That question was at the heart of *Medina v. Planned Parenthood South Atlantic*, a case ADF argued at the U.S. Supreme Court in April. After South Carolina determined that Planned Parenthood was not qualified to receive taxpayer funding as part of its Medicaid program, a federal district court forced the state to restore the abortion giant's funding, concluding that Medicaid recipients have a right to choose their preferred provider. The court ruled in favor of South Carolina, giving states the freedom to fund life-affirming care and exclude organizations that profit from abortion.

6 Rallying Against Abortion Drugs at Retail Pharmacies

ADF's corporate engagement team and like-minded allies sustained a successful campaign to persuade Costco, Kroger, and Walmart/Sam's Club to resist political pressure to sell the abortion drug mifepristone at their pharmacies. The effort leveraged 17 state financial officers and shareholders representing \$100 billion in assets under management.

7 Testifying at the Religious Liberty Commission

Five ADF clients testified at the White House's Religious Liberty Commission hearing on "Religious Liberty in Public Education" in September. The clients, along with ADF Senior Counsel and Vice President of U.S. Litigation David Cortman, gave testimonies highlighting how everyday acts of faith can become flashpoints in schools and universities and why protecting these rights remains essential.



9 Standing for Women's Privacy and Safety

ADF's legislative team saw a resurgence in efforts to protect privacy for women and girls, whose safety is at risk when males who claim to be female are allowed in restrooms, locker rooms, and other private spaces. The success of women's sports legislation — along with a growing number of stories of males harassing women in private spaces — emboldened legislatures in Arkansas, Georgia, Idaho, Mississippi, Montana, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Texas, West Virginia, and Wyoming to pass 26 ADF bills this year. Today, 20 states have laws protecting women's private spaces.

10 Overturning a Nigerian Evangelist's Wrongful Conviction

A Nigerian high court overturned the wrongful conviction of a Christian man, David*, for helping two women escape violence because of their faith. He was one of two Christian leaders who helped Adah* and Naomi* safely relocate after they converted to Christianity and faced death threats from family and community members. David, a church leader, was tortured, convicted of false kidnapping charges without legal representation, and sentenced to nine years in prison. A Nigerian high court overturned the conviction after ADF International allied lawyers intervened.

*Names have been changed for security reasons.

Case Update

This Christian School Is Back In The Game



Mid Vermont Christian School basketball players outside the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 2nd Circuit in New York City on April 9.

In a victory for religious schools, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 2nd Circuit ruled in September that Vermont must allow a Christian school back into the state's athletic association.

Two years ago, the state banned Mid Vermont Christian School from all state-sponsored sports after its girls' basketball team forfeited a game because the opposing team had a male player who identified as a girl. Playing the game would mean affirming gender ideology that conflicted with the school's religious beliefs.

Almost immediately, state officials banned the school from all state-sponsored sports. Alliance Defending Freedom attorneys filed a lawsuit against Vermont officials on behalf of the school and one of its families.

"I never thought I would be in court for simply adhering to my Christian and commonsense belief that boys and girls are different," says Chris Goodwin, coach

As a coach, I always want my team to play in fair and safe competitions. As a dad, I want my daughter to know that she should always stand up for her beliefs.

“

Chris Goodwin, Coach
Mid Vermont Christian School

of the girls' basketball team. "As a coach, I always want my team to play in fair and safe competitions. As a dad, I want my daughter to know that she should always stand up for her beliefs and should never be punished for that decision."

Located in Quechee, Mid Vermont is a faith-based pre-K-12 school whose religious beliefs form the foundation for everything it does. After the sports ban was imposed, Mid Vermont tried to provide continuing opportunities for its students by joining the New England Association of Christian Schools, a multi-state league. But the closest school in the league was over an hour away, forcing students and their parents to travel long distances to participate in games — sometimes even requiring overnight stays.

Now, thanks to the 2nd Circuit's ruling, Mid Vermont can once again participate in the state's athletic association. The court wrote in its opinion that state officials "acted with hostility toward Mid Vermont's religious beliefs" and that "the punishment imposed was unprecedented, overbroad, and procedurally irregular."

"For over two years, state officials have denied Mid Vermont Christian School a public benefit available to all other schools in Vermont just because it stood by the widely held, biblical belief that boys and girls are different," says ADF Senior Counsel and Vice President of U.S. Litigation David Cortman, who argued before the court. "The 2nd Circuit was right to uphold constitutional protections by guaranteeing the school can fully participate while still adhering to its religious beliefs." 

Alliance Profile

Aimee Huber

By Liana Imparato



Aimee Huber once dreamed of defending unborn lives as an attorney at the U.S. Supreme Court.

As a pre-teen, she was struck by the failure of laws to protect the unborn and wanted to pursue justice on their behalf. Decades later, the Lord is fulfilling that dream — though not in the way she had anticipated. She never went to law school. But this term, she'll stand at the Supreme Court to protect the pregnancy resource center to which she's dedicated her life.

Growing up in New Jersey as a pastor's kid, Aimee was immersed in the Scriptures. She learned about heroes of the faith like Esther, David, and Abraham — and she lived with her very own.

"My dad lives out what he believes," she says. "When he was preaching in church, he was the same man at home."

Aimee was just 12 when her father preached a sermon on the sanctity of life that convicted her heart.

"It was like a calling from the start ... something I could give my life to," she recalls.

After graduating college, she began volunteering with a faith-based pregnancy center in Morristown, New Jersey. A few years later, she joined the staff. Now she serves as executive director of First Choice Women's Resource Centers — a position she's held for 25 years.

The ministry has expanded to a network of five locations across New Jersey, where it provides support for women facing unplanned pregnancies. That growth has been necessary, she says, in a state where abortion is legal through all nine months of pregnancy.

The state's ethos on abortion has put a target on the backs of pro-life ministries. So, Aimee wasn't entirely surprised when, less than a year after New Jersey Attorney General Matthew Platkin issued a baseless warning to residents about pregnancy centers, he trained his focus on First Choice.

Platkin issued a subpoena in November 2023, demanding that the pregnancy center disclose a decade's worth of internal documents, including the names, addresses, and phone numbers of its donors.

Aimee contacted an attorney, who put her in touch with Alliance Defending Freedom. She remembers thinking, *OK, Lord, this just got bigger than us.* Much bigger, indeed. In June, the U.S. Supreme Court agreed to hear First Choice's case challenging Platkin's unconstitutional investigation of confidential donor information.

Despite her childhood dreams of fighting for life at the nation's highest court, Aimee never envisioned her path at First Choice would lead here.

"While we wouldn't have chosen this, God has chosen us," she says.

In times of discouragement, she draws courage from her heroes of the faith. "They all accomplished [amazing things] through the strength of the Lord," Aimee says. "If we are not willing to respond when He calls us, then we miss the blessing."

She also reflects on the influence of her father, particularly the sermon that sparked her passion for pro-life work and his faithfulness during difficult seasons that prepared her for her own future trials.

"I have no doubt that most of my life was preparation for this moment." **A**

While we wouldn't have chosen this, God has chosen us.

“

Aimee Huber

Signs Of The Times

One Man's Determination To End Gender Transition, One Conversation At A Time

By Chris Potts

It all began, you might say, with a boy and his magic wand.

The boy wore glasses, fought evil, and made his creator, British author J.K. Rowling, a household name all over the world. But her fame fast turned to infamy when, a few years ago, she leveraged her *Harry Potter* acclaim to point out that children were being irreparably harmed, and women's rights and safety were under threat by the transgender movement.

Her comments sparked swift outrage and backlash from leftists and legacy media around the globe. When one supporter put up a poster at an Edinburgh train station, captioned simply "I [heart] J.K. Rowling," it was quickly removed ... but that didn't stop a Canadian named Chris Elston from hearing about it.

Chris, a financial adviser living in the suburbs of Vancouver, was irked that Scottish officials had moved so quickly to silence support for Rowling's stand. Over the last year, he'd been spending much of his free time learning all he could about what he calls "the greatest child abuse scandal in the history of modern medicine" — the practice

of harming children with puberty-blocking drugs, cross-sex hormones, and gender-transition surgeries.

As a father of two girls, he was horrified at what was happening. He determined to take action — paying to put up an "I [heart] J.K. Rowling" billboard of his own in Vancouver. His, like the one in Edinburgh, was denounced as "hate speech" and taken down the next day.

That tore it. Chris hit the internet, posting what had happened and leveraging online outrage into a fund-raising campaign that, within a week, brought in enough money to buy billboard space in San Francisco, followed soon by billboards in Los Angeles, Portland, Washington, D.C., and New York City.

But Times Square billboards cost big money, and funds soon ran out. Even if Chris had found more cash for the cause, the sign companies in Canada refused to work with him. But a fever was growing in Chris's blood. He knew countless children were being indoctrinated in schools and on social media to believe they'd been "born in the wrong body."

Tens of thousands were being sent to gender clinics, where medications and surgeries were being prescribed that left many maimed and sterilized.

He couldn't bear to watch all that go unchallenged — but he had no magic wand to wave and make the evil go away. So, he determined to take on this massive, worldwide agenda and its activists the only way he could ... face-to-face. One sidewalk conversation at a time.

Incredibly, it turned out to be not just the only option — but the best one.

I knew what I could do. I knew I could make a difference. It felt like a calling to do something ... so I did.

“

Chris Elston

dad

/dad/
noun

**a human male
who protects
his kids from
gender ideology**



billboardchris.com



Chris Elston with his wife, Sheree, and their daughters.

'Our children are beautiful just as they are. No drugs or scalpels needed.' That's a message people can get behind.

“

Chris Elston

In life," Chris says, "all of our previous experiences contribute to who we are today." His own life experiences came down to three things. First, growing up in a healthy, happy family environment — the kind where kids knew who they were, liked who they were, and were free to bike and kick soccer balls and roam the neighborhoods of Vancouver unafraid until suppertime.

Second, raising two young girls of his own, teaching them to believe in themselves, exercise their abilities, and trust in the love, support, and protection of their parents.

And third, managing people's financial investments ... a career requiring lots of cold-calling, a practical knowledge of what's going on in the world, and an ability to communicate effectively with people exhibiting a wide range (depending on the market) of strong emotions.

Each of those experiences played a part in Chris's decision to walk away from his life's work and dependable income, hang a sandwich board on his shoulders, and step

'town square' anymore," he says. "On social media, you're in an echo chamber. Most people never see those conversations. And mainstream media — even conservative media — weren't talking about this."

From the beginning, Chris says, "I came prepared to play the long game. I wasn't starting off on a month-long adventure. I was going to keep at it until the job was done, even if it took my whole life.

"The people who are most successful are *persistent*. They don't give up. This is about reaching one person at a time, one conversation at a time, and having faith that other people will come along and — when they learn about this — start fighting it as well."

So: you want to change the world. Where to start?

"I just go outside," Chris says. "It doesn't really matter where. The more people, the better. Though it's best if people are kind of stationary. If they're going from Point A to Point B, they're not as likely to stop and have

out onto the nearest busy street to change the mind of a generation.

"I just felt like I had to," he says. "I knew what I could do. I knew I could make a difference. It felt like a calling to do something ... so, I did."

"Chris is a dad, first and foremost, who woke up with a strong conviction that something must be done about the greatest child abuse scandal of our generation," says Elyssa Koren, legal communications director for ADF International. "He just couldn't live with not saying anything.

"He's a strategic thinker, entrepreneurial, and he approaches his billboarding like a career. He's very intentional about how he gets out there, how he spends his time and energy, because he knows that — literally — lives are at stake."

"These are kids being turned into lifelong pharmaceutical patients," Chris says. "They'll never be able to have a family of their own. This is the very heart of evil. We simply had to start enough conversations to stop it."

And those conversations, he knew, had to be in the *real* world.

"We've become so accustomed to speaking on social media that people don't go to the physical

a conversation. Parks can be good. Train stations, busy downtown centers, and, of course, universities.

How well does that work? Remarkably, five years of talking with ordinary people on public sidewalks has already ushered Chris into more elite company. He now divides his time between street corners and the halls of Congress ... European parliaments ... world economic forums ... religious conferences and political conventions. He's spoken, month-in and month-out, with people of all walks of life across the U.S., Great Britain, Ireland, Scotland, Belgium, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Portugal, Austria, and Australia, as well as his native Canada.

"You never know who you'll run into," he says. "There are only so many people in the world, so ultimately, this is just a numbers game. We have the truth on our side, and the truth spreads for free. We simply need to keep telling it and — to borrow a concept from the financial world — let compounding interest do its thing. Only, it's conversations that are compounding, not money."

"If I educate one person — and you double that — you reach two. Double it again. That's four ... eight ... 16 ... 32 ... 64. Pretty soon, you're at a million. As the awareness compounds, pretty soon you've got 5, 6, 7% of the population reasonably well-informed on this issue. That's all you need."

"Any civil rights movement in history," Chris says, "comes down to a few people leading the charge and a relatively small percentage of the population getting active in pushing for change." He knows exactly which percentage he wants to activate.

"Primarily, we just need to reach parents. Nothing fires up a parent like bad people and bad ideas coming for their kids. This ideology is evil. It is harming our children, and the people pushing it are trying to usurp parental authority. We must not let this continue."

"People intuitively know that gender ideology is wrong," he says, "but they're afraid to say anything about it. Or don't know enough to speak about it."

That's where Chris's example and information — his conversations — come in.

The sign is a conversation starter," Chris says.

Someone driving by glances over, or walking by, looks up and sees a sign that says, "Children cannot consent to puberty blockers." Almost in spite of themselves, they ask, "What are 'puberty blockers'?" They may go home and look up the answer, he says, or they may come back and ask him. Either way, they find themselves thinking about an issue they'd never considered before.

Chris's message has taken him around the world. **Top:** Chris at the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland. **Left:** Chris in London with Moms for Liberty co-founder Tina Descovich. **Right:** Chris at the White House with U.S. Rep. Nancy Mace for the signing of President Trump's executive order "Keeping Men Out of Women's Sports."



He's very intentional about how he gets out there, how he spends his time and energy, because he knows that — literally — lives are at stake.

“

Elyssa Koren

And that, Chris says, “generates ripples. And you never know where those ripples might lead.”

The strategy hinges on three elements: 1) As mentioned, the sign must be displayed in an optimal place. 2) The sign itself has to draw attention. 3) The one carrying the sign has to seem approachable.

Chris carries four signs with him, to use in various combinations. He pairs two at a time to create a sandwich board, with one sign across his front and the other across his back.

Usually, the one up front is “Children cannot consent to puberty blockers.” That one, he says, tends to give people pause, because many don’t grasp what “puberty blockers” are. (They work chemically to prevent a child from developing the physical manifestations of puberty.) His second, “Dad: Noun: A human male who protects his kids from gender ideology” is especially popular, he says, with casual passers-by.

**What Chris does is
expose how much of
gender ideology rests on an
absolute absence of truth.**

“

Elyssa Koren

He breaks out the other two signs when others join him on the street. “Children are never born in the wrong body” is a fast conversation starter, particularly with young people who’ve absorbed the opposite opinion from classrooms and pop culture. And “Gender ideology does not belong in schools” draws a lot of attention when Chris stands near a university campus.

To encourage pedestrians to stop and visit, Chris — 6-foot-2, with a shaved head — takes great care to appear inviting. “I make sure I dress well. You need to present yourself professionally if you want to get respect.” Because one person is less intimidating than a group, Chris usually works alone, but sometimes one or two others will join him. He has strict requirements, though, of those who do.

“We need to be impeccable in our behavior. You have to be able to stay calm — you can’t be yelling at people when they try to provoke you. You can’t be overly negative.

You shouldn’t be swearing — that doesn’t help our cause.

“And keep the message positive: ‘Our children are beautiful just as they are. No drugs or scalpels needed.’ That’s a message people can get behind.”

A surprising number of people do, says Lois McLatchie Miller, senior communications officer for ADF International, who has followed along on the streets with Chris.



Left: Chris on a sidewalk in Vancouver.

Middle: Chris is joined by supporters outside Boston Children’s Hospital.

Right: Police stand between Chris Elston and LGBTQ activists.



“In the average city, he gets about nine-to-one support,” she says. Often, “that’s someone just giving their little thumbs-up and a wink as they walk past.” Others stop to engage and encourage Chris, expressing their

agreement, or wishing they could speak with his skill and authority about the issue.

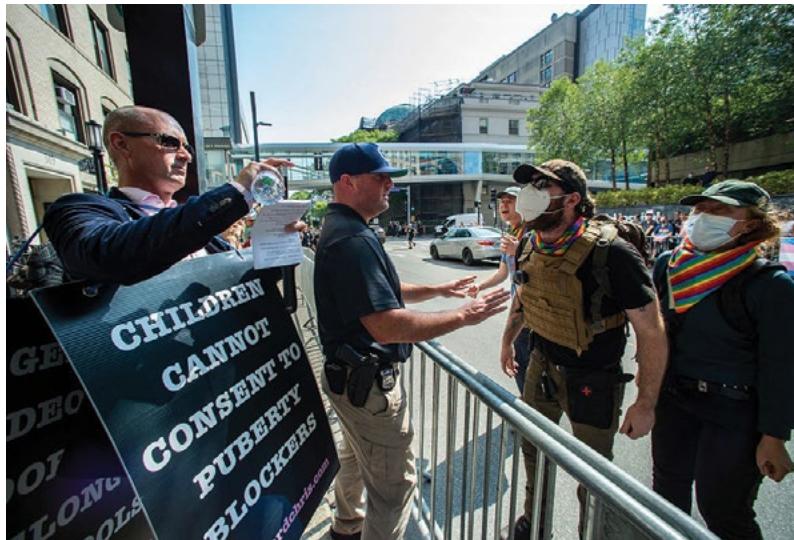
“Chris is an excellent communicator,” Miller says, with “one of these minds that just absorbs all these facts and figures. But he’s also able to use the language people need, to help them articulate what it is that they want to say. You can get really angry about these issues when you see the harms being caused to kids. But Chris can channel that outrage into something that’s more of a positive message ... which is why these billboards have been such a hit *all* over the world.”

Well ... not quite all over the world. And not quite with everybody.

People intuitively know that gender ideology is wrong, but they're afraid to say anything about it. Or don't know enough to speak about it.

“

Chris Elston



Photos on this page by JOSEPH PREZIOSO/AFP via Getty Images

Over the years, Chris estimates he's been physically assaulted more than 40 times. Shoved. Slugged. Sucker-punched. Hot coffee thrown in his face. In Montreal, a half-dozen people closed in one night, throwing punches, screaming obscenities, and swinging a heavy traffic pylon; the second blow broke his arm.

"It's going to happen," he shrugs. "In a city with a million people, you're going to get all sorts of things. It's mostly supportive, but there are always going to be some who have a problem with me. A lot of them use violence to silence."

Police aren't always helpful. Chris has been arrested three times — twice, in Canada, after being assaulted; in both cases, he was charged with creating a disturbance for standing quietly, wearing his sign. Then, in Brussels, he was taken into custody after calling the police, when a sizeable mob began to close in. Officers strip-searched him, confiscated and destroyed his signs, then released him without filing any charges. In none of the cases were his attackers arrested.

Still, "we can't let fear of violence stop us from speaking the truth," Chris says. "Otherwise, this ideology continues. Most people who object to me are not in a headspace where they're willing to accept the truth. Sometimes they're violently acting out. But if I'm calm and they're crazy, assaulting me, people who don't know

anything about this subject see me, dressed respectfully in a blazer, and some [other] person getting violent, aggressive, and angry ... I've already won."

"What Chris does is expose how much of gender ideology rests on an absolute absence of truth," Koren says. "People really rebel because he comes armed with facts. He knows so much about the catastrophic implications of this ideology. About the actual physical effects of puberty blockers and cross-sex hormones, and all of these experimentations that children are subjected to."

"When people are forced to look at those facts — and the facts are often quite uncomfortable and even gruesome — they resist the messenger," she says. "So many people have sanctioned this ideology or turned a blind eye to it." Chris, with his facts, she says, "creates an enormous response from people. Maybe it's guilt, that they're letting this happen in front of their very eyes, and — by saying nothing — they're basically approving it."

"Every time they try to draw attention to what I'm doing — to stop what I'm doing on the street — all that does is make the message stronger," Chris says. "All it does is make it reach more people. So, the more they try to stop me, the better, as far as I'm concerned."

The most concerted effort to silence Chris came last year in Australia, where he inadvertently prompted

a major legal action after learning that the World Health Organization had appointed an individual named Teddy Cook — a woman who identifies as a man — to its panel of experts on gender. Chris had read a *Daily Mail* article detailing Cook's X-rated sexual proclivities, and posted the article on the social platform X, referring to Cook as a woman and criticizing her as unfit for such an appointment.

Australian authorities moved quickly to censor his post, led by the country's "eSafety Commissioner," an official charged with removing problematic content from the country's social media platforms under the guise of "online safety." The commissioner pressured X to take down the post down; X left it up but geo-blocked it in Australia — ensuring that Australians couldn't see it until a hearing could settle the issue.

X and Chris — the latter with the legal support of the ADF International team and the Australian Human Rights Law Alliance — both sued, and both cases were heard together in a week-long hearing in Melbourne. Officials argued that their censorship was justified, calling what Chris had done "hate speech" and a violation of Cook's rights. This, even though everything in the *Daily Mail* article was public information — and had been publicly disclosed by Cook herself.

Essentially, the commission was granting itself power to censor opinions it didn't like — on a global scale. In a decision that made international headlines, the Australian tribunal ruled that the commissioner had overstepped her authority and violated Chris's free speech rights.

"[His victory] just speaks to this enormous pushback that we have across the world," Miller says, "where people are standing up and saying, 'This is enough. We can't hold in free speech anymore. We have to challenge this. This is not a local issue — it's a global trend.'"

Cases like Chris's, she says, "are all part of the same story: suppressing the right to speak the truth. Yes, the truth will always find its way out, but we must protect that right because it speaks into all these other important conversations that we must be having, in order to protect people ... to advance human dignity ... to help communities care for each other and flourish together."

[His victory] just speaks to this enormous pushback that we have across the world, where people are standing up and saying, 'This is enough.'

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Lois McLatchie Miller



Chris (center) displays some of his "billboards" with ADF International team members (from left) Paul Coleman, Elyssa Koren, Lois McLatchie Miller, and Robert Clarke.

For all the physical attacks, arrests, and legal actions, Chris remains unswerving in his sense of his calling. "I don't really worry about all the negativity," he says. "You can't. You just have to keep telling the truth."

"He doesn't do this casually," Koren says, "and he doesn't show fatigue. He has this complete willingness to wake up every day and start anew and just ... keep going. He's not overwhelmed by the enormity of the goal that he's trying to accomplish. He's actually invigorated by that."

"A lot of us," she says, "could just look at the bleakness of the picture and kind of throw our hands up. But he's a really excellent model of looking at a real crisis — one that often seems like it isn't winnable in the short term — and approaching it with enthusiasm and a positive attitude."

"That's why people respond so well to him," Koren says. "Because he does believe that we're winning, and he has the facts on his side."



Chris increasingly finds opportunities to share his story not just on street corners, but with a growing variety of larger audiences worldwide. Here he speaks to young people at ADF's Areté Academy Commonwealth.

Chris now makes it a point to record his conversations, as they happen, and then publish the videos on social media under the moniker "Billboard Chris." Not only the thoughtful conversations, but the violent ones, and the ones that end with him in handcuffs. At present, he estimates that his posts draw a billion views per year.

A billion.

That "compound interest" idea? It's working.

"It's pretty clear he's been successful," Koren says, "based solely off the premise that, when you ask someone, 'Have you heard of Billboard Chris?' more and more you get a very *enthusiastic* 'yes.' His message is not unique to him, but his delivery certainly is: engaging in viral street conversations wearing a sign.

"We know, at the end of the day, what people crave is face-to-face interaction. So, even though he uses the digital world to spread his message, he's having these conversations *in person*. He's affecting people at a personal level — he makes people think.

"This is one of the most important causes of our day — and one of the greatest medical scandals in history," she says. "If we can't speak about *this* — ending puberty blockers, hormone therapies, and horrific surgeries where children are getting their bodies changed in permanent, serious, harming ways — we can't speak about anything.

"Chris's energy and positive spirit really give people hope that we can win," she says. "And, in fact, we are. We're seeing wins across the world because of this positive message."

From the beginning, Chris says, "I knew I was going to come under a lot of abuse and my life was going to change. People would try to cancel me and all that. But I know who I am, and my wife and daughters know who I am. And, ultimately, that's all that matters.

"This is about the ideology itself and the harm being done to kids. I just stay focused on that."

"Chris has done more than any other single human being to really make it clear to people that we have to take a stand against this," Koren says. "With him, we're working toward the moment where every child is safe from this extremely dangerous ideology."

"I'm just a guy having conversations," Chris says. "I had faith in humanity to stop this. I had faith that other people would come along to help me. That's why we're having so much success."

Still, it's important — in a world increasingly deaf to the cries and pain of children — to have someone out in front who understands sign language. **A**

This is one of the most important causes of our day — and one of the greatest medical scandals of history. If we can't speak about this ... we can't speak about anything.

“

Elyssa Koren

My View

Why I'm Standing With The Title IX Generation

By Lainey Armistead

There's no shortage of poetic moments at weddings, but I can't help but feel that mine was especially relevant.

Some might say I was tempting fate, holding one of the most important events of my life during hurricane season in the South. Sure enough, as the big day approached near my Kentucky hometown in fall 2024, gray clouds gathered, winds whipped, rain pounded, and regrets poured in from friends whose flights were grounded.

Today, women and girls across the nation are facing storms of their own when they step onto the track, the pitch, the court, or any other competitive field of play. They're being forced to compete against males.

In 2021, I was a scholarship soccer player and team captain at West Virginia State University.

That year, West Virginia passed the Save Women's Sports Act, which keeps males who claim to be female from taking part in women's sports. Common sense should be enough to protect women and girls from having to compete against bigger, faster, and stronger males — but states also need to step up. I'm proud of West Virginia for doing what's right.

Unfortunately, the American Civil Liberties Union is suing the state to challenge the law. In fact, if the ACLU has its way, equal opportunities in sports that women and girls have enjoyed since Title IX was signed into law in 1972 will be dead and gone.

Not on my watch.

Lainey (front left) joins other ADF female athlete clients at a Title IX 50th anniversary rally in Washington, D.C., on June 23, 2022.



I enjoyed one winning season after another because West Virginia's law protected athletes like me from playing against male competitors.

“

Lainey Armistead

With the help of Alliance Defending Freedom, I am intervening in a case to protect the fairness and safety of female athletes across West Virginia. In July, the U.S. Supreme Court agreed to hear the case.

As a young athlete, I saw countless sunrises through weightroom windows. I missed school dances, spring breaks, and outings with friends, devoting my time instead to grueling practices in pursuit of being the best I could be on the field.



Common sense should be enough to protect women and girls from having to compete against bigger, faster, and stronger males.

“

Lainey Armistead

At WVSU, I enjoyed one winning season after another because West Virginia's law protected athletes like me from playing against male competitors. But I knew about other girls who weren't as fortunate.

In 2019, Connecticut high school track athletes Selina, Alanna, and Chelsea refused to accept their tarnished athletic records after they were forced to compete against — and lose to — two biological males. ADF represented them in a Title IX complaint, then filed a lawsuit to protect female athletes in Connecticut a year later.

In 2020, college track and cross-country athletes Madison and Mary Kate stepped up to defend Idaho's law protecting

women's sports after being forced to run against a male. Their case is being heard at the Supreme Court alongside mine in this term.

It's an honor to stand with the brave young women who came before me. I will not let my sacrifices, and those of other women and girls, be tossed aside. When we ignore biological reality, women pay the price. In the worst case, that price is physical injury. But we're also losing medals, potential scholarships, and opportunities to compete.

Last year, I joined a panel discussion at the United Nations about safety and fairness in women's sports. At first, I wasn't sure I wanted to speak alongside well-known advocates like Olympic swimmer Sharron Davies and ADF CEO Kristen Waggoner while representatives from all over the world looked on. *This is not my forte*, I thought. But then I remembered what I'd learned in my ADF media training: *Just tell your story. Why are you here? Do women and girls matter?* I could confidently answer those questions.

So, I shared my experience, urging the global audience to make sure women have equal and safe opportunities to compete — to stand up and speak out with me.

ADF had shown me the power of speaking up, even before my Title IX case came up. In 2020, during COVID, my soccer coach told me and my teammates that we weren't allowed to go to church. I had a big problem with that.

My mom had heard about ADF and helped me get in contact with the organization. After an attorney sent a letter to my coach, she relented. I brought some of my teammates to church with me soon after, and one of my roommates ended up getting saved. It was really formative to see the impact that ADF could have.

And now we're seeing the organization's impact on women's sports.

ADF has been defending Title IX since 2019, and these efforts have led to a seismic shift. Over half the country now has laws on the books that protect female athletes, and the federal government has rightly recognized what humans have known since our time on earth began — that men and women are different, and those differences matter. Now, we watch and wait: Will the Supreme Court allow states to protect athletic opportunities for women and girls?

Storms don't last forever. I know because I watched as God winked at me on my wedding day.

The clouds parted minutes before my wedding was supposed to start, and golden Kentucky sunshine bathed the grounds in gorgeous light. We got to take pre-ceremony pictures outside as planned, and the deluge held off until after the ceremony.

The rain continued shortly after, but when I look back on that day I don't think much about the storm. Instead, I remember that God was there in the midst of it.

So, to all women and girls braving fierce cultural headwinds: No matter what happens at the Supreme Court, know that the clouds are starting to break. And I hope you'll never forget that you are not alone. **A**

LEARN MORE about ADF's battle against gender ideology. Visit JoinADF.com/FJ-Gender.



Q & A

ADF And Charlie Kirk's Legacy

By Chris Potts

Photo by Joe Raedle/Getty Images

The assassination of Turning Point USA founder Charlie Kirk in September – and the profoundly disturbing celebration of it – were brutal reminders of the intense opposition many across the country feel to the values he so ably represented: the priority of faith and family, and the crucial importance of speaking truth freely and courageously on America's college campuses.

His death hit close to home with many at Alliance Defending Freedom. Not only does the organization share Kirk's commitment to faith and free speech, but ADF attorneys have frequently represented TPUSA chapters:

On a Michigan campus, speech zones blocked the group's members from discussing the First Amendment. At a New York university, administrators hampered student efforts to launch a chapter. In Tennessee, school officials allowed a student mob to shut down a TPUSA event featuring a conservative speaker.

A 19-year veteran of ADF, Travis Barham serves as senior counsel and plays a key role with the ADF Center for Academic Freedom, which focuses on preserving and reclaiming religious freedom, freedom of speech, and freedom of association for

students and faculty at universities nationwide. He recently shared some of his team's perspective on the legacy of Charlie Kirk and how ADF is continuing the great struggle to preserve free speech on America's campuses.



Travis Barham

F&J: What impressed you about the work Charlie Kirk was doing?

TB: His boldness. He was fearless and had a sincere desire to reach out and engage the other side in a substantive conversation about many of the controversial issues that we face in our culture today. He inspired thousands of young people with the way that he defended conservative values and Christian beliefs.

I saw a clip of him talking about how the most important thing is leading people to Christ and the second most important is resolving the political issues that allow you to do the most important thing. That summarizes, in different words, our mission at ADF, which is to keep the door open for the spread of the Gospel and defend the right to hear and speak the truth.

F&J: How did his approach differ from ADF's? Did our efforts strengthen each other?

TB: They were flip sides of the same coin. Charlie was out there exercising

his free speech rights, and ADF's mission is to make sure that he and others like him can continue to do so. In higher education, there's supposed to be a marketplace of ideas, and that marketplace of ideas has to include the ideas and the values that Charlie and those with him were defending. His efforts dovetail with ours. We were already defending free speech in higher education, even before Charlie came along. But he was out there trying to engage students, faculty members, and administrators in a discussion of the ideas that matter, and we were there to say, "This is a conversation that needs to happen and that university officials cannot stop."

F&J: What are some of the primary ways free speech is being blocked on campuses today?

TB: Threats of violence and shutdowns pose real problems, but they're usually coming from students or left-wing groups. These become a constitutional problem when university officials then use the students' hostility as an excuse to stifle speech. They say, "We can't let you speak because somebody else might misbehave."

Some officials also use speech codes to tell students, basically, "You can't say that; it's not civil or tolerant" or the like. Other times, through "speech zone" policies, they try to quarantine student speech to certain areas of campus. They say students can speak only in a few tiny areas that are only open a small fraction of the week. Sometimes, they simply treat conservative and Christian groups differently by preventing those groups from even being recognized on campus or from receiving funding that's available to every other student group. And then, we've seen universities try to compel people to believe or say certain things — mandating

"transgender" terminology, for instance, or punishing students simply for believing certain things. Compelled speech and compelled belief are utterly antithetical to the First Amendment and insulting to a free people.

F&J: How is ADF moving to roll back opposition to free speech on campuses?

TB: We're trying to defend constitutional freedoms for both the long- and short-term. Short-term, when folks are willing to stand against these unconstitutional policies, we've seen great success. In 90-plus percent of those cases, the policies get changed. Long-term, with our legislative team, we're working to pass statutes across the country that protect the freedom of university students to speak their minds. This legislation prevents

express your ideas, then you cannot share the Gospel.

F&J: What gives you hope that we will continue to be more and more successful?

TB: I look back and see how God has blessed those who've been willing to take a stand. And our victory rate testifies abundantly to the fact that when God's people are willing to take a stand, God blesses their courage by bringing them success. Policies get changed. Looking into the future, it appears that a now-much-more-emboldened group of conservative and Christian students are willing to take a stand. If you combine those two things — the protections of the law that our Founding Fathers put in place to secure our freedoms and an invigorated group of folks ready to exercise those freedoms — that gives me great hope and optimism.

He inspired thousands of young people with the way that he defended conservative values and Christian beliefs.

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Travis Barham

colleges from imposing speech codes and speech zones and from treating Christian groups differently than everyone else. These measures give students a state law remedy to go after these policies and insist that universities respect the First Amendment.

F&J: Why is ADF's work so pivotal to sharing the Gospel on college campuses?

TB: ADF defends the right to hear and speak the truth. We also keep the door open for the spread of the Gospel. Those two are related because if you can't speak or

F&J: What do you see as Charlie Kirk's legacy to today's students?

TB: Charlie Kirk's legacy to students today is one of boldness: simply being willing to go out there in public and defend biblical values without fear, without shame, without hesitation, and to endure the slings and arrows, the slurs, the phony outrage, the performative antics that the other side throws at us in an effort to silence us. I hope that's the legacy that countless conservative and Christian students take from his life, and that they internalize that and then go out and do likewise. 

Opinion

Universities Must End The Violence That Is Plaguing US Campuses

By Tyson Langhofer

On the eve of the anniversary of 9/11, one of the most horrific tragedies in our nation's history, evil showed its ugly face yet again. An assassin's bullet needlessly took the life of husband, father, and political activist Charlie Kirk. His supposed offense? Debating. This senseless act of murder was committed on the grounds of an institution that should be a beacon of free thought and expression: a college campus.

I want to say this is unexpected or that political violence on campus is unlikely, but I've been defending the rights of students and faculty at

public universities for too long to say that this is a total surprise. As director of Alliance Defending Freedom's Center for Academic Freedom, I've seen everything from mobs on campuses blocking and verbally abusing a pro-life speaker to our own CEO being shouted out of a bipartisan presentation at Yale Law School. The unspeakable horror we witnessed on Sept. 10 was a predictable destination of the trajectory of escalating violence on our college campuses.

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Tyson Langhofer



When I watched everything unfold, one specific instance came to my mind. In 2020, students at the State University of New York at Binghamton invited renowned economist and Presidential Medal of Freedom recipient Arthur Laffer to speak on campus. Co-hosted by Young America's Foundation and the College Republicans club, Laffer was set to present an extracurricular discussion titled "Trump, Tariffs, and Trade Wars."

An economist speaking about tariffs and trade wars is about as innocuously wonky as it gets. But

four days before the event was set to take place, College Republicans hosted a table where they handed out hot chocolate and flyers promoting the event. Members of the campus College Progressive group incited about 200 students to “disrupt this disgusting space.” When they arrived, they confiscated and destroyed flyers, broke down the table, hurled obscenity-laced insults, and physically assaulted one College Republicans member.

On the day of the event, protesters shouted down Laffer on a megaphone for nearly two minutes before he was escorted off campus. He didn’t even have a chance to speak.

The kicker is that school administrators and police knew about the threat and did virtually nothing about it. The College Progressives and a local antifa group advertised that they were going to disrupt the event, yet university police allowed masked protesters to flood the venue and do what they said they would do. Rather than try to stop the disruption and allow the event to continue, university officials escorted Laffer from the venue. To add insult to injury, campus police blamed the conservative student group for hosting the event, as if college campuses are supposed to be no-speech zones.

There is an alarming lack of viewpoint diversity among faculty and administration in higher education

Tyson Langhofer

The increased violence in response to free speech on college campuses shows us the threefold problem infecting schools across the nation.

First, there is an alarming lack of viewpoint diversity among faculty and administration in higher education. In one study, the liberal-to-conservative ratio of faculty in American universities increased from 2:1 in 1989 to 5:1 in 2017. A 2022 report from the National Center for Free Speech and Civic Engagement confirmed similar results, with 65.5% of professors estimated as “solidly liberal” and only 13.2% “conservative.” In 2023, a Harvard study showed that its faculty displayed a 26:1 ratio. Uniformity of thought breeds intolerance of disagreement.

Counterfeit unanimity feeds the delusion that only evil people could disagree with a certain viewpoint.

Second, there is a widespread belief throughout higher education that certain speech is equivalent to violence. According to this ideology, if speech you disagree with is comparable to violence, then it is acceptable to use violence to oppose such speech.

Finally, university officials routinely allow progressive students and faculty to violently disrupt conservative speakers and events. This refusal to fairly enforce the laws further encourages and emboldens future violence against such speakers.

The solutions are straightforward. Hiring a diverse faculty would show students that noble people can be found throughout the political spectrum in good faith. Hosting debates on important topics of the day makes clear that speech is not equivalent to violence. And, importantly, enforcing the university’s laws and policies uniformly and fairly, regardless of the person’s political or ideological views, sends the message that students and faculty who shout down or violently interrupt speakers and speaking events will not be tolerated. If universities adopt these policies of greater diversity and accountability, they will again become a marketplace of ideas, rather than an assembly line for one type of thought.

We can only hope that Charlie Kirk’s needless murder will be the beginning of the end of violent speech suppression on campus. 

This is adapted from an article that appeared in the Washington Examiner on Sept. 17.

There is a widespread belief throughout higher education that certain speech is equivalent to violence.

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Tyson Langhofer



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