



In just ten short years, the Alliance Defense Fund has been involved in hundreds of cases in defense of religious freedom, the sanctity of human life, and traditional values. The stories below are just a small sampling of the ongoing battle to protect our religious liberty, reclaim what we have lost, and shape a future where religious freedom is affirmed.

THE CASE OF THE STUDENT TEST

Indiana public education officials seemed to have something to hide. When a concerned parent named Ramona Mays expressed concern that the state was engaging in psychological testing of public school students, she requested to see the documents related to the test.

Her request was ignored by the state of Indiana and the company it had hired to administer the tests – despite the fact that the state had an “open records” law that requires public departments – including the Department of Education - - to make information available within seven days of the request. She heard nothing but silence. The reason? The officials claimed that allowing public access to the testing materials would undermine the “academic integrity” of the testing system. Finally, the officials only turned over “six” documents – when there were over 100 documents regarding the test.

And what did Ramona learn? Children were asked to keep a journal “to record personal feelings and observations.” They were asked questions that were intended to elicit personal feelings, and then be evaluated on whether they could “integrate values or value systems into one’s own style or philosophy of life.” Key words in evaluating the children’s journals were “broad-minded,” “flexible,” and “tolerant.” Scorers were to look for a student’s “readiness to revise judgments and to behavior in light of evidence” and the degree to which a student “changes opinion on controversial issues when examination of the evidence and the arguments call for revision of opinions previously held.”

In the hands of a teacher who is pro-abortion or promotes homosexual behavior, these tests could be used to convince children to reject the beliefs of their parents.

Ramona finally filed a lawsuit, with ADF funding, to force the Department of Education turn over the testing material. The filing of the lawsuit caused enough controversy and revealed enough facts that the state legislature passed a bill requiring that the test records must be opened to concerned parents and the rest of the public.

You can read Ramona Mays' letter to ADF founder James Dobson (which led her to contact ADF) below:

A Letter from Ramona Mays

Dr. James Dobson
Focus on the Family
8605 Explorer Drive
Colorado Springs, CO 80920

Subject: Prayer and Assistance in Upholding Family Rights

Dear Dr. Dobson,

I am the mother of three elementary school age children. My husband and I are longtime listeners of *Focus on the Family*. I'm writing you now with the feeling that we have known each other for a very long time. Last year about this time, I formed a local parents group called *Taxpayers Involved in Education*. Our mission statement is, "Taxpayers Involved in Education has been created to research legislation and to provide input and support to the school administration so as to aid in maintaining local control of our students' education and to ensure that it is reflective of the community's ethics and values." Not long after our inception, we began researching the recent changes to our state's education policies passed into legislation by Indiana Public Law 19. This law established the framework for restructuring our schools under a program called "Indiana 2000." Just a little research revealed that this was our states implementation of the national "Goals 2000" educational reform program. This appalled us because our federal congressman, the honorable Congressman Dan Burton, voted against these reforms, and still the state of Indiana was pressing ahead with its implementation. We were able to obtain a copy of the contract between the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) and the publishing company. It appeared that the system was established more for the purpose of gathering data on the children and their families than it was for educating them in reading, writing, and arithmetic. It also appears to develop a methodology for systematically changing the values and beliefs of our children through remediation of incorrect answers to psychological questions on statewide assessment examinations. We see this as a direct assault against the family and our Christian beliefs.

The Indiana Department of Education has not been supportive in providing taxpayers and parents with answers to their questions regarding the new educational reforms. We have spent the past year requesting, first informally then formally with the aid of a lawyer, 100 items of documentation referred to in the contract with the publisher that would either confirm or dispel our fears. They have not been forthcoming with the information, which leads us to believe that they are hiding something. The state of Indiana has an open records statute that requires them to make this information available within seven days of official request. This time period has come and gone numerous times because of our willingness to give them every opportunity to perform their duties. It became necessary last week for us, with the support of four legislators and another parents group, to file legal suit against IDOE in order to make these documents available to the public.

We ask for the prayers of you and our fellow listeners so that we might continue to be guided by our Lord, Jesus Christ, and that His will be done in our concern for the rights of families in this state. At this point in time, it's my husband's and my personal finances that are funding this effort. Although we feel that it is a small price to pay for the protection of our children and that the Lord would have us use His resources this way, we are limited in how long we can fight an establishment of this size that is bent on stonewalling us and having its own way. We would be grateful if you would refer us to the Alliance Defense Fund, which has been established for supporting fellow Christians like us in efforts like these. We have a wonderful Christian attorney, John Price, who has taken on the case. Our court date has been set. In addition, it is imperative that when the Lord delivers the documents into our hands, we have the ability to publicize their contents to the families in this state and others.

Again, we ask for your prayers and guidance and that the Lord our God will facilitate the collaboration of fellow Christians in this hour of need. It is for His glory that we strive to inform others and to protect His families and those who have not yet seen the light.

In Christ's name,
Ramona D. Mays

Hosea 4:6 "My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also reject you as my priests; because you have ignored the law of your God, I also will ignore your children."

THE CASE OF THE POLITICALLY CORRECT PRISON

In 1995, volunteer chaplains at the Hennepin (Minnesota) County Prison received the following letter from a county official:

“A disturbing matter has come to my attention from several residents and staff...Without going into detail, as I understand it, an incident occurred in which volunteers told residents that homosexuality is a sin. While I will be talking personally to the Coordinator and volunteers involved, I want to make it clear to all of you that Hennepin County’s overall policy is: Respect Diversity. Whether differences are based on religion, national origin, race, sexual orientation, disability...Hennepin County is committed to providing an environment which is respectful of differences and free of comments or actions which may be offensive. It is crucial that all volunteers, as well as paid staff, understand this requirement...I need to make it clear that in performing [volunteer service] you are required to abide by the County’s diversity policy...Those who, for reasons of conscience or otherwise, who don’t agree to this will be requested not to be involved in the volunteer program...”

This memo basically told the volunteer chaplains that if you teach what the Bible has to say about homosexual behavior, you are not welcome to volunteer your services to minister to inmates. Such a gag order meant that a chaplain couldn’t tell an inmate that his or her sexual behavior was as a sin that Christ could forgive. If an inmate asked a chaplain, “Do you think homosexual behavior is a sin?” the chaplain would have to remain silent or have to say, “I’m sorry, government policy prevents me from answering that question.”

Only after ADF funded ensuing litigation in federal court would the county alter its Gospel censorship rules. This action forestalled many other limits on chaplains and others elsewhere.

THE CASE OF THE RIGHTEOUS LANDLADY

Before Evelyn Smith's husband died of pancreatic cancer, he purchased four small townhomes as rental properties in order to provide his wife with income after he was gone. Mrs. Smith lived on the proceeds from these rental units.

When a vacancy occurred, Mrs. Smith advertised it. A couple came by to see the unit and inquired about renting it. Mrs. Smith responded that she did not rent to smokers, pet owners, or unmarried couples. As a committed Christian, she felt that making money from renting to unmarried couples amounted to an endorsement of their sinful activity. Her strong faith prevented her from doing this.

The couple told Mrs. Smith that they were married, agreed to rent the townhome, and gave her a deposit. Later they called to admit that they had lied, and were not married. Mrs. Smith again explained her religious reasons for not wanting to rent to unmarried couples and agreed to return their deposit.

The next thing she knew, Mrs. Smith was called to a hearing before the California Commission for Fair Employment and Housing. The unmarried couple had filed charges with the commission, claiming that Mrs. Smith had discriminated against them based on marital status. (It turned out that the couple were "plants" from the Fair Housing and Employment Commission sent to check out Mrs. Smith's rental policies).

The laws and regulations that were designed to prevent landlords from discriminating on marital status were intended to protect single mothers, not cohabitating couples. They were not meant to allow unmarried couples to force property owners to accept their extramarital behavior as a civil right.

The commission ruled against her and not only ordered her to pay fine, but told her that she had to put up a signed poster on her wall that detailed the litigation against her, the fact that she had lost, and that she would not do it again. The poster basically said, "I am a marital status discriminator."

ADF provided assistance to Mrs. Smith in her appeal of this case. After four years of work, the appellate court reversed the commission's decision and ruled that Mrs. Smith had a right to express her religious beliefs in her renting policies.

That ruling was appealed to the California Supreme Court, which overturned that ruling and said that Mrs. Smith's religious convictions could not influence her rental practices.

With ADF assistance, Mrs. Smith appealed to the United States Supreme Court, which denied review of the case. Nevertheless, ADF has been able to use the arguments established in Mrs. Smith's defense to successfully defend other landlords who have been taken to court for basing their rental decisions on their religious beliefs.

A COURAGEOUS WOMAN THE CASE OF THE ABANDONED FAMILY

The homosexual agenda is not an impersonal force. It touches and destroys the lives of real people, like a Christian mother whose husband announced that he was leaving her and her two boys to enter into a new homosexual lifestyle as a “transgendered” female. For three years, she was locked in a devastating legal battle with her former husband who began living with a woman as a lesbian and sued her for custody of their children. His case was supported by wealthy and powerful national homosexual “rights” groups. By God’s grace, ADF provided the funding she needed to keep custody of her children – a battle she won in 1997. Here is her personal testimony from when she was in the midst of the battle:

“I have two boys. My oldest son was in kindergarten, and my youngest was two and in diapers when this all began. One of the things that I wanted to share with you is some of the details of the attack on my family...”

We have lost a father and a life partner. My mother has lost a son-in-law, and his parents have lost a son. We lost our home...Security, self-confidence, and inner peace were lost because of this very traumatic situation. My six year old and I have undergone periods of extreme grief resulting in depression. A loss of financial strength has occurred from the breakup of our family. The loss, pain, and sorrow of a family being broken up and of the unusual twist to mine have been very intense.

I felt like my life has been saved because of your support and backing. My boys and I would not have had a chance at justice if we did not have financial backing because litigation is so very expensive and time consuming. You don’t have a chance at justice if you can’t get your foot in the door and then maintain the stand that you are trying to take.

Most of the losses that the boys and I have endured, and the pain and the suffering, cannot be regained. I also know that the Lord is performing a lot of healing through the scarring process. I am not so much concerned for the harm that has been done to our family but for the possibility of future harm to my boys...ADF has made it possible for me to proceed on from the circuit court to the court of appeals. You have made that possible for the amount of time that it has taken to work on this precedent-setting case. To prepare a brief for the appellate court to look at and to determine that the circuit court make a drastic mistake in granting out-of-state, unsupervised visitation to my former husband [and his sex partners] have been battles. The battles that we are in are not over.

There is literally a battle for the hearts and minds of my children. It has been quite frightening. I have had no experience in the legal system until now. It is a stand that I know the Lord is requiring of me for my little boys. It is a precedent-setting case in my state, and I know the outcome will affect other spouses and children in other states...There has been a certain amount of persecution. I’m simply a mom standing

up for the best interest of my children, but the ridicule that I have received has been quite interesting. I have been told that I am closed-minded, and I have been accused of poisoning the minds of my children. I have been threatened with fines and jailing...

She won her case in 1997 and a few years later, we received the following note from her:

"I continually thank God for the work of ADF and the impact you have made on my family, especially my children. I received a grant from ADF back in the organization's infancy. At that time my husband had left me, our young children, and the truth of Scripture which he had professed for over 20 years for the homosexual lifestyle...I was fighting for sole custody of my children and the right to raise them in the truth of Scripture while protecting them from the indoctrination of the homosexual theology. I was awarded sole custody and restrictions were placed on what could occur during his visitation with the children. His appeals and desire to overturn this order were denied and the lower court's ruling was upheld...God's faithfulness despite our circumstances has been seen in each of my children's acceptance of Christ as their Lord and Savior..."

THE CASE OF THE DESPONDENT FRIEND
THE CASE OF THE ANGRY GRANDMA

For twenty years, senior citizens at the Balch Springs (Texas) Senior Center have used the facility for social programs and recreational events. A group of Christian seniors had also gathered – without government interference -- at the center to sing gospel songs and hear the Word of God from a retired pastor. These seniors also quietly say a word of thanks to the Lord when they receive their meals at the center. All prayers and participation in the worship service are voluntary – no one is coerced into praying or attending.

Then things changed. In August 2003, the city of Balch Springs enacted a new policy that stated that all mealtime prayers, gospel music, and “religious messages” cease immediately. No other group was censored, only Christians.

Liberty Legal Institute, with ADF’s backing, jumped in to defend the right of these seniors to worship God at the center. Liberty Legal immediately sent a demand letter to the city – which was ignored -- to reverse its policy or face a lawsuit on the grounds that they had denied the seniors their First Amendment right to worship freely. The seniors were willing to take a stand. Some began to very peacefully picket the center to protest the actions of the city.

Then the city fired the center’s events planner and bus driver – cutting off the seniors’ access to museum outings, the state fair, and funerals of their friends. They even refused to allow the seniors to go to the drug store to get their prescriptions filled!

As promised, Liberty Legal – led by ally Kelly Shackelford -- filed a lawsuit against Balch Springs – alleging multiple violations of both the Texas and U.S. Constitutions. The city’s response? They threatened to stop the meal service to the seniors if they did not drop the lawsuit!

The situation had gotten so bad that the United States Department of Justice got involved – opening an investigation of the city’s policy.

Finally, at the federal courthouse in Dallas, Balch Springs agreed to end its discriminatory policy. In addition, the judge ruled that the seniors were to receive monetary damages from the city.

DIVINE PROVIDENCE

In 1993, Robert Wendland, a husband and father of three, was critically injured in an automobile accident that left him cognitively disabled. After sixteen months in a coma, Robert awoke, and with time and physical therapy, started to regain some cognitive and physical abilities. Nevertheless, midway through his physical therapy, his wife, who also served as his conservator, sought to not only have his treatment stopped, but also to remove his feeding tube. This was despite the fact that Robert had never expressed his wishes regarding future treatment if he became disabled. Robert's mother went to court to block the tube's removal and with the assistance of ADF and its allies, she won at the trial court level.

His wife appealed to the appellate court which ruled in her favor. Robert's mother then appealed to the state Supreme Court. By this time, Robert had progressed to the point that he could operate a manual wheelchair with his left hand or foot or an electric wheelchair with a joystick. He could also operate an augmentative communication device to give "yes" or "no" answers to questions.

The California State Supreme Court issued an unanimous 6-0 decision ruling in favor of Robert's mother and consequently, the right to life for disabled individuals was affirmed and the so-called "right-to-die" was dealt a crushing blow.

Now...here is where God's tremendous providence comes into the picture and how He can turn tragedy into triumph...

Sadly, Robert Wendland passed away after the California Supreme Court heard the oral arguments in the case. If Robert had died earlier, while this case was still at the lower court level, it might have never made it to the California Supreme Court because the issue could have been considered moot and untold numbers of disabled individuals may have faced an early death.

Janie Hickok Seiss, the attorney for Robert's mother said: "It [the decision] is going to save a lot of lives. I just wish Robert were here for this."

But through His providential timing, the Lord used Robert Wendland's tragedy to give hope to those individuals and families who will face such difficult decisions in the future.