

FAITH & JUSTICE

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In a sea of fear, one youth chooses to stand for
his freedom — and yours, too

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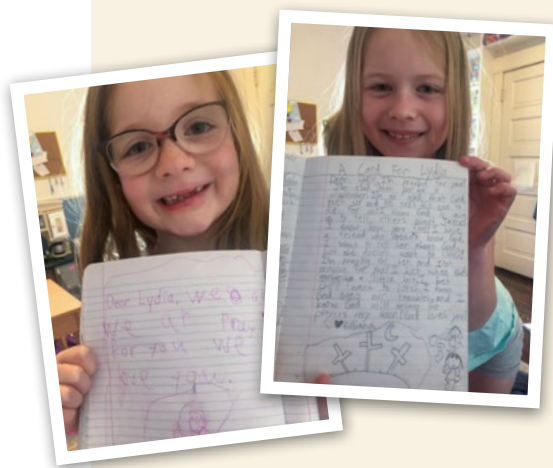
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Letters To The Editor

Loved the cover story "Unmasked" (February 2021 *Faith & Justice*). I am so excited that this family stood up for their daughter's freedom of speech and religion. It is amazing how she is spreading God's good news on a daily basis just from her wearing such a great mask. Blessings to your organization, and keep up the great work!

— *Sheila A.*



I recently read your article about Lydia Booth. My girls (my oldest being close to Lydia's age) have written encouraging letters to Lydia. It's powerful for my kids to see other kids being a witness for Christ and even living through some persecution for it.

Dear Lydia, We are praying for you. We love you. — *Moriah*

Dear Lydia, I'm glad that you are a missionary. I know God is using us to tell others about Jesus. I know how you feel! I have a friend who doesn't know God. I want to tell her about God, but she doesn't want to listen. I'm praying for her and I'm praying for you. I know God sees our troubles, and I know God will answer our prayers very soon! — *Elliana*

— *Jamie J.*

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May 2021 | Vol. XIV, Issue 2

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Minutes With Michael

The Courage To Stand Alone

By Michael Farris, President and CEO

Less than two years after I graduated from law school, I received a call from a local leader who asked me a fateful question.

“Mike,” she began, “Congress just passed a bill extending the time for the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment by a little over three years. What do you think about that?”

“Dottie, I think it is unconstitutional,” I answered.

“So, what are you going to do about it?” she asked — and it wasn’t really a question or a suggestion. It was more like a command.

A few weeks later, I filed the first lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of the purported extension of the deadline for the ERA.

Our political opponents went to the Washington State Bar Association with a resolution urging a boycott on travel to any state that had not ratified the ERA. The resolution was to be debated at the annual convention.

**Jack didn’t know who was with him.
But it was pretty clear who was against him.
And he stood. He stood strong.**

“

Michael Farris

The speaker who introduced the resolution on the convention floor was the chief counsel for the Washington Education Association — the teachers’ union. She was backed by several other speakers, including past presidents of the state bar association.

I alone spoke in opposition to the resolution. I was young. I was scared. I was alone.

But I knew that the ERA advanced abortion, LGBT ideology, and a host of other bad ideas, so I had no choice. I had to stand.

The vote was taken. And to everyone’s shock, my side won the vote. Even though I was the only one



willing to take a stand, there were more who agreed with me than anyone expected.

Similarly, Colorado cake artist Jack Phillips stood alone when he made the decision not to violate his commitment to God. He knew he couldn’t, in good conscience, design a custom wedding cake to celebrate a same-sex marriage.


Jack didn’t know who was with him. But it was pretty clear who was against him. And he stood. He stood strong.

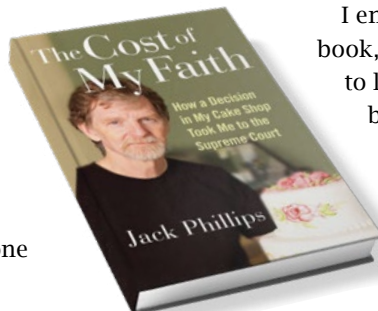
A host of people, including ADF’s litigation team and our wonderful Ministry Friends, have stood with Jack through all the years of battle. And many thousands of others who are allied in spirit have also prayed and encouraged him in countless ways.

Jack stood for himself. But in reality he was standing for all of us. And many have understood that.

His courage is contagious. His story deserves to be known in depth.

I encourage you to read Jack’s new book, *The Cost of My Faith*, not simply to learn more about this faithful man, but to encourage and equip you when it is your time to stand.

The Cost of My Faith is available through major booksellers. 



News & Quick Takes

Case Updates From Around The World

Syracuse, New York

A district court ruled that the state of New York cannot revoke a faith-based adoption provider's authorization to place children for adoption while its lawsuit against the state proceeds.

The state of New York threatened to shut down New Hope Family Services' adoption program because of the agency's policy to place children only in homes with a married mother and father. ADF filed a lawsuit against the state on New Hope's behalf. Located in Syracuse, New York, the agency has placed over 1,000 children in loving homes since beginning its adoption program in 1965.



"We live in a diverse state, and we need more adoption providers, not fewer," says New Hope Executive Director Kathy Jerman.



Jack Phillips

Lakewood, Colorado

Colorado cake artist Jack Phillips faced trial in his third legal case in March, this time over his decision not to design a cake that celebrated a gender transition.

Autumn Scardina, a biological male who identifies as a woman, attempted to order a custom cake that was pink on the inside and blue on the outside to celebrate Scardina's "transition from male to female." Phillips declined the request because creating this cake would have required him to express messages in conflict with his religious beliefs.

The Denver County District Court already dismissed one of Scardina's claims. The court is currently considering a second claim through which Scardina is trying to punish Jack for declining to create the gender-transition cake. The remaining claim went to trial March 22.

Lansdowne, Virginia

The ADF Board of Directors has approved the purchase of a new property in Lansdowne, Virginia, currently owned by Prison Fellowship.

ADF leaders shared that the new location will enable them to

advance the ministry's mission, facilitating coalition-building, expanded training opportunities, and networking with allies in the area. The property will also allow ADF to grow over the next 10 years, without the current space constraints of its nearby offices in Ashburn, Virginia and Washington, D.C. ADF will continue to operate its offices in Scottsdale, Arizona and Lawrenceville, Georgia.

"Prison Fellowship's founder, the late Chuck Colson, was a strong advocate for freedom of conscience and religion," says Michael Farris, ADF president and CEO. "With the purchase of this new property, we carry on his legacy."

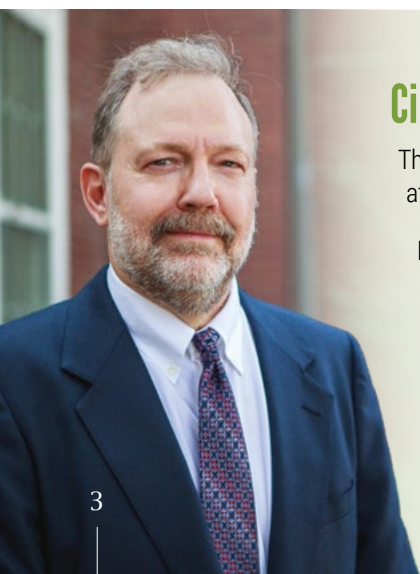


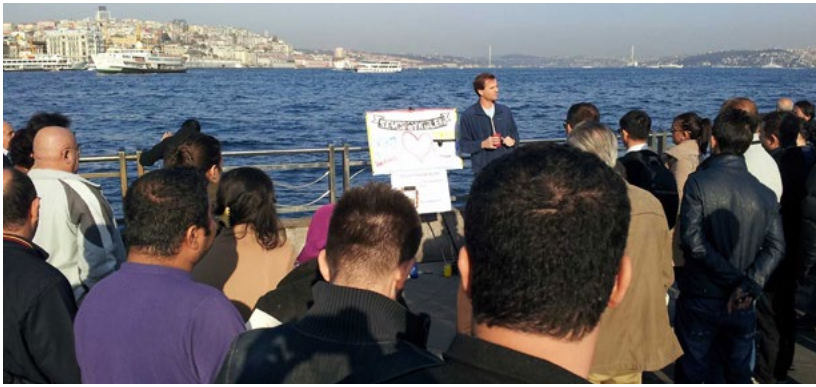
Cincinnati, Ohio

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the 6th Circuit ruled in favor of Dr. Nicholas Meriwether, a philosophy professor at Shawnee State University, reversing a district court's dismissal of his lawsuit against university officials.

In 2018, the university disciplined Meriwether because he declined a male student's demand to be referred to as a woman, with feminine titles and pronouns. The professor offered to call the student by first or last name, but the university rejected the compromise. The 6th Circuit ruled that, based on the allegations in the complaint, the university had violated Meriwether's First Amendment rights.

"Because Dr. Meriwether had the courage to take a stand," says ADF Senior Counsel John Bursch, "all professors at public colleges and universities have a clear precedent for their rights to be protected."





David Byle preaches about the love of Jesus in the harbor area of Istanbul.

Turkey

ADF International has filed a case at the European Court of Human Rights on behalf of David Byle, a Christian evangelist who was forced to leave Turkey after living and ministering there for 19 years.

Byle, who holds both U.S. and Canadian citizenship, had been arrested multiple times for evangelizing in Istanbul. He first faced threats of deportation in 2016, when the Turkish Interior Ministry claimed he was a “threat to national security.” He legally contested the order and was granted an injunction that allowed him to stay.

He faced another arrest in 2018 and was given a new order to leave the country within 15 days. Authorities imposed a permanent reentry ban, and Byle now resides with his family in Germany.

“The government did not want us in Turkey, but plenty of people do,” Byle says. “God called us there, [and] He wants the Turkish people to hear about Him.”

Vietnam

Three Christian teenagers in Vietnam have been granted permission to attend high school after the government waived the requirement for identity documents.

The teenagers are members of the Hmong community — a Christian ethnic minority — who are denied basic identity documents because of their religion. Without proper documents, most Hmong children are unable to enroll in school, obtain access to medical care, or enjoy many of the basic services afforded to other citizens.

With the help of ADF International and Boat People SOS, Giàng, Lý, and Sùng were able to obtain approval from the authorities to enroll in high schools in Lam Dong Province even though they are not recognized as Vietnam citizens.



Sùng

‘Equality’ sounds like a good idea, until it’s weaponized to punish religious convictions or to force us to ignore biological reality.

“

Kristen Waggoner
ADF General Counsel

The So-Called Equality Act

If President Biden signs the Equality Act into law — an effort he has promised to prioritize — ADF expects to be called on to file more lawsuits to protect the First Amendment rights of Americans.

The Equality Act would add “sexual orientation” and “gender identity” as protected classes to many federal nondiscrimination laws, forcing people of faith to promote messages and celebrate events that conflict with their sincere beliefs. Several ongoing ADF cases vividly illustrate what that would look like:

- Creative professionals like promotional printer Blaine Adamson and floral artist Barronelle Stutzman have faced discrimination because of their religious views of marriage and family.
- Female athletes like Connecticut sprinter Alanna Smith have been forced to compete against men who identify as women. (See story, p.17.)
- Downtown Hope Center has faced the threat of closure because it will not open its women’s shelter to biological men.

VISIT

[AllforFreedom.com](https://www.allforfreedom.com)
to learn more

The deceptively named Equality Act would guarantee inequality and create countless victims.

The Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) has just launched a ‘Stand for Freedom’ ad campaign that’s meant to warn against the Biden administration’s numerous threats against freedom.... I say ‘Bravo’ and hope to see many similar campaigns.

“

George Leef, *National Review*

Special Feature

Facing The Opposition Of A New Administration

ADF is ready, willing, and able to defend
the rights of all Americans

By Michael Farris



Immediately after his inauguration, President Biden's administration launched an assault on the God-given freedoms of all Americans.

On Day One, Biden signed an executive order that removes protections for women and girls in sports, locker rooms, and other contexts. Since then, he has funneled tax dollars to fund pro-abortion organizations overseas and has promoted an agenda that sees religious freedom as disposable.

President Biden has said that he would be a unifier and president for "all Americans." But the policies he supports suggest otherwise. His agenda has broad support from far-left lawmakers, who now hold the majority.

Put simply, our most cherished freedoms face a severe threat. But through God's grace, Alliance Defending Freedom is already standing in the gap to defend those

freedoms — something we could not do without your partnership.

ADF has launched a Stand for Freedom campaign, which invites all Americans to stand with ADF to protect freedom for all. This is the largest advocacy campaign in our history, organized to confront the most comprehensive threat we have faced yet.

**ADF's work is more important now than
at any other time in our 27-year history.**

“

Michael Farris, President and CEO
of Alliance Defending Freedom

ADF's work is more important now than at any other time in our 27-year history. Our message is simple: the Biden administration is bound by the law, and ADF will stand against attempts to violate our constitutional

freedoms — whether those attempts come from cities, schools, state legislatures, Congress ... or the president's administration. We're prepared to defend our God-given rights all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court, if necessary, as we have done time and time again.

The Biden administration is bound by the law, and ADF will stand against attempts to violate our constitutional freedoms.

“

Michael Farris

Through the Stand for Freedom campaign, we are committed to raising our profile across the nation and around the world. We are doing this not in a spirit of pride, but of encouragement and inspiration. In this trying season, we want Christians and those who cherish freedom to know that they are not alone.

ADF has always understood the importance of alliance. Throughout our history, we have worked to bring like-minded organizations and individuals together. Right now, however, we believe it is time for ADF to step up. It is not enough for us to support this alliance. It is time to champion it — to raise the flag of freedom high.

Here's one way to think of it: During the Civil War, troops on each side enlisted a flag-bearer. This soldier had one responsibility: to keep the flag flying. As long as the flag was flying high, troops knew that the struggle was still on and victory was possible. Seeing their flag gave soldiers the courage to keep pressing on.

By God's grace and provision, ADF is well-positioned to be a flag-bearer in today's continuing struggle for freedom.

The Stand for Freedom campaign is intended to inspire ADF's Ministry Friends, followers, and our broader alliance to defend religious freedom, free speech, parental rights, and sanctity of life. We know that tens of millions of Americans are not on board with the far left's plans for America. But many feel isolated, silenced, and powerless. Through this campaign, ADF wants to tell our allies and supporters that they are not alone — and they are not powerless.

The campaign empowers freedom-loving Americans in every sphere — education, business, finance, homemaking, the arts — to stand up for our fundamental freedoms. ADF has a strong record as a compelling voice of reason, a winsome and victorious advocate for truth. Consider our winning record:

- **12 victories** at the U.S. Supreme Court — just in the past 10 years
- A role in **61 U.S. Supreme Court victories**
- A **17-0 record** defending our church and ministry clients from unconstitutional COVID-19 restrictions during the pandemic

- **435 victories** protecting free speech rights on public school campuses — some of the most heavily censored areas in our country

Americans have no greater friend than ADF when it comes to protecting life and our First Amendment freedoms. And the Biden administration can expect to meet ADF in court when they threaten life and violate those constitutional freedoms.

By God's grace, ADF is taking a stand. For truth. For rights. For freedom.



Ways You Can Get Involved

We're working to add new advocates who share ADF's values and believe that ADF can be counted on to effectively defend them against attacks on their First Amendment freedoms.

We invite you to join this effort.

WATCH Learn why your freedoms are at risk, and how ADF is equipped to stand for your God-given and constitutionally protected freedoms for such a time as this. Watch the video: ADFlegal.org/fj-stand

PRAY ADF's work is more important now than at any other time in our 27-year history. Pray for the success of our Stand for Freedom campaign.

SHARE Help spread this message. Visit the Stand for Freedom web page, and share the link with family and friends. Encourage them to promote the campaign within their networks as well.

Visit ADFlegal.org/ADF-Stand-For-Freedom





Case Update

Supreme Court Rules For ADF Client

Chike Uzuegbunam

The U.S. Supreme Court sided 8-1 with Alliance Defending Freedom client Chike Uzuegbunam, a former Georgia college student who was prevented from sharing his Christian faith on campus.

A lower court dismissed the case because the college changed its policies and Chike had since graduated. The Supreme Court decision recognized that government officials can be held legally accountable for violations of the law. That decision allows the case to continue as Chike seeks nominal damages.

Twice Silenced

In 2016, Georgia Gwinnett College officials twice stopped Chike from sharing his Christian faith with other students on campus. The first time, college officials said he could only speak when using one of two tiny speech zones that made up 0.0015% of the campus — the equivalent of a piece of notebook paper on a football field.

Chike did what they asked. He reserved a time in a speech zone and went there to speak about his faith. But this time, officials stopped him because they said someone complained. Officials told him he could face discipline if he continued speaking.

**How do you assign a value to the
loss of free speech?**

“

Kristen Waggoner, ADF General Counsel

Chike was forced to stop sharing his faith on campus, and another student self-censored after seeing how officials had mistreated Chike.

ADF filed a lawsuit on Chike's behalf, and the college changed its unconstitutional policies as a result. But Georgia Gwinnett did nothing to rectify its abuse of his civil rights. ADF attorneys continued to seek justice for Chike in the effort to hold the college accountable for its wrongdoing.


Why Nominal Damages Matter

While a change in policy benefits current and future students at Georgia Gwinnett, it does nothing to address the fact that college officials violated Chike's rights. Chike is seeking nominal damages to address the loss of his constitutional freedoms while he was a student.

Two lower courts said that courts need not pay any damages for past constitutional violations unless those violations also caused a quantifiable, economic injury.

“But violations of constitutional rights aren't often susceptible to easy price tags,” says ADF General Counsel Kristen Waggoner, who argued Chike's case before the Supreme Court. “Chike will never get back the opportunity to share his faith with his peers. What's that worth? How do you assign a value to the loss of free speech?”

“The amount ... is not necessarily significant. What is significant is that the past injury is afforded some sort of redress.”

Chike's case has received broad support — from the ACLU to the Jewish Coalition for Religious Liberty — as he seeks to hold government officials accountable for violating his free speech rights. 

Alliance Profile

Rev. Craig Muehler

President, Chaplain Alliance For Religious Liberty

By Chris Potts

What flavor are you?" It may seem an odd question, but it's a common one for chaplains in the U.S. military — and to the serviceman or woman asking, a pretty important one, says Rev. Craig Muehler, recently retired after 28 years as a Navy chaplain.

Understandably, a Methodist sailor likes to learn his chaplain is Methodist; a Catholic pilot hopes his *padre* is a Catholic. But come the crunch of life issues, unforeseen circumstances, or military crisis, "flavors" can quickly seem irrelevant. A soldier just wants someone to talk to.

"That's what's so beautiful and rewarding about being a chaplain," Muehler says, "the ability to be among them and serve them." And once a chaplain — whatever his faith — has been living, eating, running, slogging with those he serves for a while, "they know you're *their* chaplain. They don't even care what faith group you are."

Except when they do. Sometimes, the particular service a person in uniform requires contradicts the faith beliefs of a particular chaplain, or the traditions of his or her church. Baptists don't give last rites, Muslims don't believe in infant baptism, Catholics don't do same-sex weddings, etc.

At that point, it's the chaplain's responsibility to find a colleague who can better accommodate the soldier's request ... and Muehler's responsibility to defend that first chaplain's right to refrain from a duty that would violate his or her conscience.

Muehler is president of Chaplain Alliance for Religious Liberty (CALL), a nonprofit group that defends the religious freedom and constitutional rights of all military chaplains, whatever their denomination or religion.

Organized in 2011 with the help of Alliance Defending Freedom, CALL's work includes answering congressional questions on military issues, educating


officers on religious freedom in the military, helping chaplains navigate the military bureaucracy when they are questioned about their choices, and — when necessary — linking them up with attorneys from ADF and other groups who will defend their freedom through litigation.

It's a role steadily taking on more importance, Muehler says, as "encroachment from the government is getting stronger and trying to dictate what a chaplain can or can't do, what they can or can't believe." Although ADF attorneys helped CALL secure crucial legal protections for chaplains years ago through a resolution in the National Defense Authorization Act, Muehler says the so-called "Equality Act" that's been working its way through Congress this year could soon undo much of that.

Should the Act pass, Muehler says, he and many other chaplains are concerned over who will define some of the terms being thrown about in the escalating culture wars. "Extremism," for instance, is a label that, carelessly used, could "effectively outlaw certain churches and faith traditions for military personnel. It's just a slippery slope," he says.

"That's the struggle I see a lot of my young chaplains having," says Muehler. "They're getting pushed to ... compromise their conscience on some of these things. And I say, 'No. Don't do that. Be faithful to your God and your vows.'"

Muehler draws deep hope from the fact that God continues to raise up men and women who want to do something for their country through the military. "When you look at these young kids still going, volunteering to serve our nation," he says, "it's humbling."

"They know how to maneuver those waters, be faithful ... walking that line without compromising. [Serving] God and country — they still think that's achievable." 



**Encroachment from
the government is
getting stronger.**

“

Rev. Craig Muehler

Cover Story

A Noble Cause

In a sea of fear, one youth chooses to stand
for his freedom — and yours, too

By Chris Potts

The phone on the desk at city hall was ringing again. Luke Wong, all of 16 and soon to be a junior in high school, knew the call was his to answer. This was why they paid volunteer summer interns so much money.

He didn't know who was calling, but he had a pretty good idea what the call was about. It was the same thing every call had been about since the big storm hit his town of Harrison, just north of New York City, earlier in the week.

"It's been two days," a frail voice said, on the other end of the line.

"Yes, ma'am, I know, but ..."

"There's still no power!"

"Yes, ma'am. We —"

"I'm 97 years old."

"Yes, ma'am. I completely understand."

Gently, Luke explained once again that the mayor's office had no power to turn the lights back on. City officials can clear a street. City officials can take away the tree that fell on somebody's roof. But only the utility company can make electricity flow.

And yet, Luke was learning, people don't care so much about *why* they're not getting electricity. They just want the refrigerator and the television working again. They want order and balance in the universe. They want someone to tell them the answer they want to hear.

Which is why, 16 years old or not, Luke was exactly the right person to be taking Harrison, New York's phone calls that week. He really did understand the frustration.

He knew exactly how it felt to want answers ... and not be getting them.

And like so many others, impacted by a storm, he simply wasn't willing to take "no" for an answer.

Luke can't really tell you exactly when he became interested in political ideas. The second of four children (and the only boy), he's grown up in a warm, close-knit family of the kind that still sits around the same dinner table and engages in lively discussions over the meal.

As far back as he can remember, he's been listening to his dad talk about current events, and what he heard eventually set him to reading columnists and listening to conservative podcasts. As years passed, and civics and social studies classes accumulated, he found he was accruing enough information to tell when his teachers were giving him the straight scoop about history and events — local, state, and federal — and when they were selling their own political perceptions.

**This is what I'm supposed to do – my calling.
And I intend to see it through.**

“

Luke Wong





You have to pick a hill to fight on, and sometimes, it's a privilege
— you get to pick a hill that is really worthwhile.

“

Tai Wong

Luke wasn't above questioning his peers — or, sometimes, even his instructors — if he thought their ideas a little squishy. (His sixth-grade teacher sparked a lively discussion when she called Ronald Reagan a “horrible president.”) And, as he moved into high school, he began to understand just how much those interactions and discussions meant to him.

“I always found it interesting,” he says, “just debate and speaking in general.” Looking to his future, “I knew what I *didn't* want to do. I didn't want to go into engineering, [or] become a doctor. Those weren't things that really appealed to me. I realized, ‘Hey, [public service] is something I could have a future in. This is what I'm supposed to do — my calling.’ And I intend to see it through.”

Luke's political passions really crystallized when he talked his father into taking him, halfway through his freshman year, to the 2019 Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) in Maryland. A major draw for conservative leaders, legislators, and activists from across the country, the annual gathering offered a chance for Luke to immerse himself in the political atmosphere — listening to speeches, meeting fellow enthusiasts, getting his picture taken with some of his heroes.

“It was his idea,” says his father, Tai, a precious metals trader. “I was like, ‘Wow, okay, I've got to take a couple of days off and go to this thing.’” But he could see Luke's fervor growing. “Someone said to me that what you want to provide for your children are

experiences. And this is something that he's really interested in ... something that I think is worthwhile."

He could also see his son dreaming of the future — and being willing to work for the dreams.

"You want to find something that you want to do," Tai says, "something that lets you sort of be yourself. That's important." Through his family and their local Southern Baptist church, Tai has seen Luke develop and strengthen his grasp of "what is right and wrong ... and I think that drives his passion, in terms of being awake to important issues of the day that a lot of kids don't get."

"He's really, really well-informed. And that's effort. You don't get that without work."

**If I don't do this,
maybe nobody will ever do it.**

“

Luke Wong

Mingling happily at CPAC, Luke heard from another conservative student about Young Americans for Freedom (YAF), a national organization for college, high school, and middle school students interested in discussing and promoting conservative ideas on campus. Affiliated with Young America's Foundation, the group was created in 1960 by William F. Buckley Jr. with the goal of instilling a conservative perspective in the younger generation.

Intrigued, Luke introduced himself to Kyle Ferrebee, a young YAF representative, who told him how he could launch a chapter of the organization on his own. Luke resolved to go back to Harrison High School and do just that. After all, other than his classes, his church activities, his involvement with the school swimming and cross-country teams, teaching himself Korean, and co-editing the campus newspaper, his time was largely his own.

It had not escaped Luke's notice that none of the existing clubs on the Harrison campus discussed political topics from a conservative perspective. Which was not to say that his fellow students or teachers were apolitical. Luke perceives a strong leftist bent among many of both, and for all the animated conversations he'd been a part of, in and out of the classroom, he knew his conservative convictions set him apart.

"I have kind of gone against the grain a little bit," he says.

Talking up the idea of YAF with his peers, he drew mixed reactions. "They said, 'This is a pretty cool thing

Luke Wong at the 2020 Conservative Political Action Conference. Below: Luke meets then-Secretary of State Mike Pompeo.



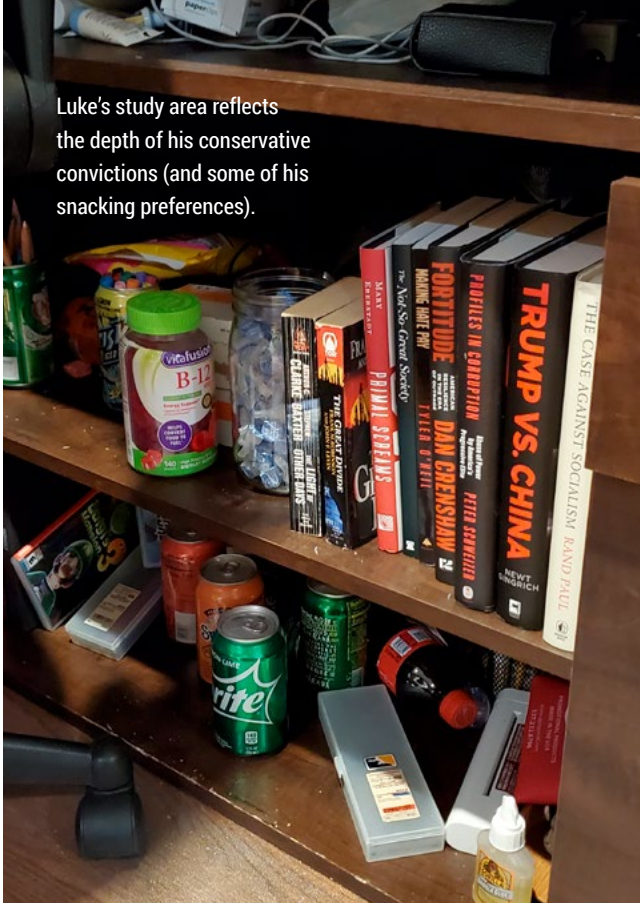
— you should try to get it started," he remembers. Then, in the next breath, "I don't know if the administration is going to go for it. This is something I'd join, but I don't want to put my name down. It's too controversial."

"They're scared of being retaliated against," Luke says, "either by other students or by the administration." He also wonders if they're thinking how their participation might look on a college application.

Later, trying to recruit a faculty sponsor for the club, Luke would find that teachers shared those students' concerns. One candidly told him, "I know YAF. It's a great organization. I would love this ... but I'm scared of losing my job."

Fear, Luke began to realize, was something in the air all around him at Harrison High.

Luke's study area reflects the depth of his conservative convictions (and some of his snacking preferences).



Luke soon learned that the best-kept secret at Harrison was how to start a new club on campus. “I remember asking six different people, all of whom had formed clubs in the last few years, ‘Is there a process? A form?’ No. I checked the official website. No.” All anyone would tell him is, “You have to talk to the assistant principal.”

The assistant principal, as it turned out, had a busy spring. Luke asked to meet with her in April, shortly after he got back from the CPAC event, but she didn’t call him in until June, at the very end of the school year. Even then, it was a pretty short conversation.

Luke told her of his desire to launch a YAF club. She told him no.

What she wouldn’t tell him, exactly, was why. Even in the months to come, as Luke continued to politely pester her for a valid reason, she never came up with a consistent one.

“I got a whole bunch of different arguments,” Luke says, “none of which really made sense. Sometimes, I just didn’t get an answer. It was very confusing.”

The assistant principal said she didn’t like the idea of a club that was part of a national organization. Luke pointed out that one of the biggest clubs on campus, DECA — a group that encourages young entrepreneurs — was part of a global organization.

She worried that a conservative club would not be open to all students. Luke assured her that every student would be welcome — though only students who agreed with YAF’s principles could serve as officers.

She insisted that Harrison didn’t support clubs that stood for one particular political candidate or ideology. Luke understood the part about candidates, but thought it strange that a school so dominated by people of one political bent would not allow students one forum for hearing more conservative views. If anything, he hoped to bring more balance to what Harrison students were learning about politics.

The more the assistant principal seemed to grasp for new reasons to block a YAF club, the more Luke began to wonder if blocking it was really her idea. Was she trying to enforce a policy — official or off-the-record — from district officials, or maybe the school board?

“A lot of stuff happens behind closed doors,” he shrugs. He decided if he couldn’t open some of those doors, perhaps YAF could.

By the time Luke contacted his old CPAC acquaintance Kyle Ferrebee for advice, Ferrebee had been promoted to executive director of YAF. Hearing what Luke was up against, there were things that surprised Ferrebee, and things that did not.

What did not especially surprise him was the attitude of the administrators. Of the 600 or so campuses that express interest in starting YAF chapters, only about 200 a year actually launch one. And one of the impediments is school administrators.

“Schools drag their feet,” Ferrebee says, explaining that, often enough, students don’t learn of YAF or embrace their own conservative principles until their last year or two of high school. By then, it’s a race against time. A club can’t attract members until it’s recognized, and can’t be recognized without official approval. Meanwhile, administrators know that, in a few months, the seniors pressing for the club’s genesis will be graduating. If the school stalls long enough, those most passionate about starting a conservative club will have moved on. Problem solved.

There’s a rising fear both from cancel culture and societal pressures just to avoid the conflict — shut ideas down that we don’t want to hear — instead of responding with better speech and better ideas.

“

Caleb Dalton, ADF Legal Counsel

Given recent events in American politics, Ferrebee predicts, “a lot of institutions are going to be emboldened to violate students’ rights. And students are just afraid to ask questions when they know they have belligerent administrators.”

Which is why what *did* surprise him about Luke’s particular situation was ... Luke himself.

“He is very, very determined,” says Ferrebee. “He stuck with it.” Most of the hundreds of YAF chapters Ferrebee works with face obstacles, he says, many of them “nowhere near as difficult as Luke’s. And they all go, ‘I don’t want to deal with it.’ They don’t want to stick with it. Luke sticks with it.”

“It takes a special person to start a student organization,” Ferrebee says. “Not everybody’s a leader. Sometimes people are just built to push, and they want to speak out and they want to organize. They’re a minority of people ... and they usually are seniors.” That Luke started pressing his case as a freshman gave him one of his best advantages in the showdown: time.

He also had one other factor in his favor.


“Luke’s dad, Tai, is very engaged, too,” Ferrebee says. “That’s unusual. That makes it so much easier. Most

[parents] are afraid for their student’s welfare. But when Mom and Dad say, ‘Hey, Son, Daughter — you can do this’ ... it’s something we’d like to see more.”

YAF has an audience of more than a million on Facebook, and hundreds of thousands more on YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter. Once they put out the word on all channels about what Luke was up against, that news caused considerable commotion — online and on campus. But administrators still refused to budge on allowing the club.

So YAF suggested that Luke and his dad take a different tack and talk with Alliance Defending Freedom. Through its Center for Academic Freedom, ADF has successfully represented clients in several YAF-related cases. And like YAF, ADF attorneys have a solid grasp of what students are often up against in standing for Christian or conservative principles at their school.

“There’s a fear of free speech on many campuses and by many administrators,” says ADF Legal Counsel Caleb Dalton. “It’s tied to cancel culture. It’s tied to the fact that freedom is inherently risky. If you have any type of freedom, it may be abused. You have free speech,



Most [parents] are afraid for their student’s welfare. But when Mom and Dad say, ‘Hey, Son, Daughter — you can do this’ ... it’s something we’d like to see more.

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Kyle Ferrebee,
Executive Director,
Young Americans for
Freedom

and some people may say things that are untrue or hurtful. But instead of realizing that is the price of freedom — and the answer is more speech, not censorship — many retreat in fear.”

In some cases, Dalton says, that fear seems to be tied up with ignorance of First Amendment rights as they apply on public high school and university campuses; in other cases, it’s apparently motivated “by animus toward conservative values, by people who want to use their power to silence conservative voices.”

Still others just want to avoid controversy, Dalton says, “and that may be what happened here. They thought maybe they could just avoid the whole thing by telling Luke no, and it would all go away. But they ran up against somebody who was willing to stand up for his rights — and for everybody’s rights on campus — to enjoy equal access. What many don’t realize is that every civil rights movement has advanced only because of free speech.”



It’s not a matter of disrespecting authority; it’s actually a matter of upholding the governing authority of the land, which is the Constitution.

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Caleb Dalton, ADF Legal Counsel

ADF’s first overture on Luke’s behalf was a formal letter to Harrison High officials, reminding them of the constitutional protections of freedom of speech and assembly, and the school’s obligation to approve or reject all proposed clubs according to one clear, fixed, published standard. “They can’t just willy-nilly decide, ‘We’re going to approve this club,’ or, ‘Tomorrow we’re not going to approve any more,’” Dalton says. “That’s not how the Constitution works.”

The school officials’ first response seemed promising: they pledged right away to recognize Luke’s club, review campus club policies, and revise and enforce those policies in accord with students’ constitutional rights. “Right away,” though, became a month. Then another. And another. Administrators kept coming up with new reasons to slow down the process.

The next step would reasonably be a lawsuit against the school — a big step, and one Luke and his family knew could have far-reaching implications.

“Our concern,” Tai says, “and it continues to be a concern, is: what kind of retaliation will he face?” A lukewarm recommendation ... a school award missed ... a lost chance to speak at graduation ... a future subtly changed with a scholarship lost, an admission denied, an opportunity evaporated. And all of that quite possibly inflicted on Luke’s younger siblings, too, coming up behind him.

None of those are things you can prove, Tai says. All of them, as a parent, you wonder about. Is establishing a club that administrators don’t want worth any of that?

With the first legal demand letter sent, Tai realized, “you’ve placed your bets. You have to be ready. We made our decision based on, yes, there’s a risk, but the risk is worthwhile. Luke really wants to do this. And this is something we as parents have always said is important. We’ve got to stand up for what we believe in.”

“If I don’t do this,” Luke told his father, “maybe nobody will ever do it.” He thought of his friends who

had said, “We really like the idea, we believe in you, but ... we’re too scared to be part of this right now.” Luke’s parents, he noticed, didn’t say that. Neither did YAF. Or ADF.

“The only thing that could have possibly held me back was myself,” he says. “And I realized I shouldn’t pull myself back from doing this ... because this is really important.”

In the end, the Wongs opted to send one more demand letter before filing a lawsuit. That one did the trick. School board members, it seemed, had their own apprehension: a fear of being sued. At its next meeting, the board approved the YAF club.

Luke waited for the roof to cave in. To his amazement, it didn’t.

“After the news came out, the response was extremely positive, and I was pretty shocked. A lot of my teachers were just super happy for me. A lot of students felt the same way. I got tons of messages from kids, saying, ‘Hey, look, I don’t agree with you in terms of politics, but I really appreciate that you’re standing up for what you believe in.’” Local Facebook pages overflowed with support, too, from his Harrison neighbors, asking, “How can I support this kid?”

To be sure, some students hurried to denounce Luke, and — inevitably — call him “racist.” Some complained that now the school has no “far left” organization.

The only thing that could have possibly held me back was myself. And I realized I shouldn't pull myself back from doing this ... because this is really important.

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Luke Wong

“Fine,” Luke told them. “Start one.” Thanks to Luke, there’s a precedent for that now.

Even school administrators have been pleasant, since the decision, a fact the Wongs appreciate.

“We never knew where all this would lead,” Tai says. “We never wanted to make it us against the school, against anybody specific in the school. It’s just conservatives against a system that’s monolithic, that’s arrayed against conservatism. A system that, if you don’t push, you don’t get anything. You have to pick a hill to fight on, and sometimes, it’s a privilege — you get to pick a hill that is really worthwhile.

“Hopefully, this will all work out. If Luke goes to a top school, that’s great, but I know he will find his way. He’s found his passion.”

Two things Dalton — who, with his fellow ADF attorneys, has successfully handled so many cases like the Wongs’ — wishes more families understood as

they face an education culture increasingly inhospitable to people of faith and conservative values:


“One, that they’re not alone,” he says. “And two, that standing up for their rights to equal access and free speech is noble — and it’s not just for them. It’s not a matter of disrespecting authority; it’s actually a matter of upholding the governing authority of the land, which is the Constitution. And that’s not something that’s just for them. It’s for everyone.

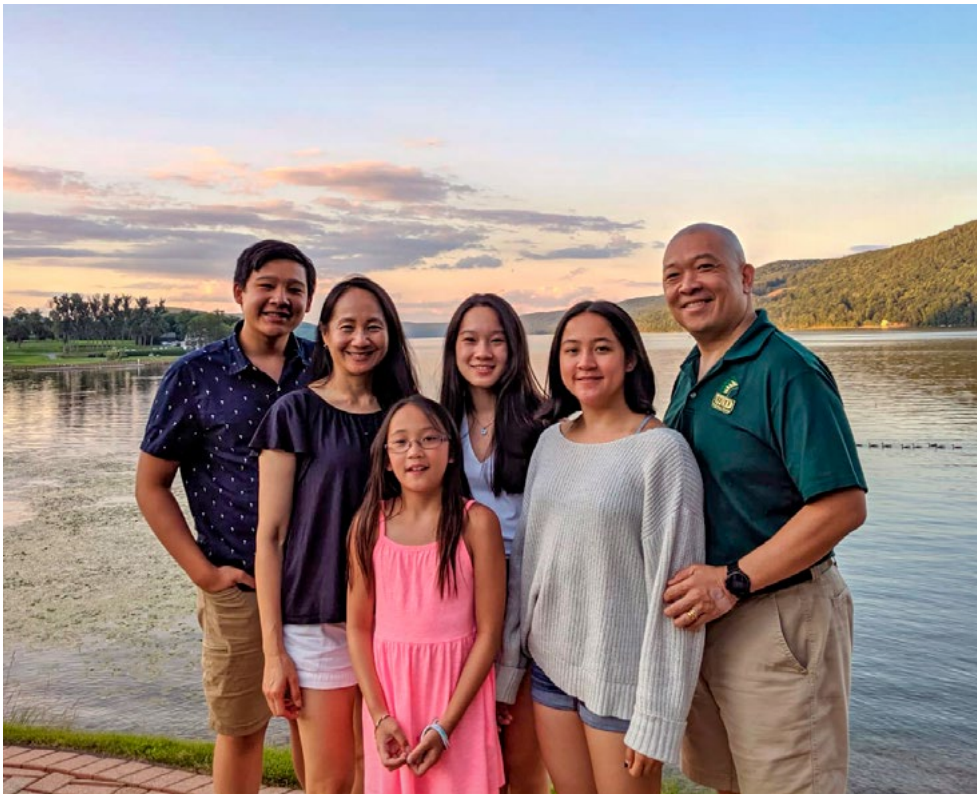
“They’re fighting for the freedom of all Americans ... and it’s a noble cause.”

COVID restrictions meant that the first meeting of the Harrison High YAF Club, earlier this year, had to be held online. Thirteen students tuned in. Luke explained about the national organization, talked about conservatism, asked for questions. He emphasized free speech.

The second meeting concentrated on media bias; another discussed the sanctity of life. Slowly, attendance is growing.

“Even if I don’t wind up working directly for conservative causes, it’s something I hope to contribute to,” Luke says. “Because I think there’s a way back for us to kind of not hate each other. After seeing people who probably don’t agree with me on anything say, ‘Hey, I don’t agree with you, but I admire you for standing up for what you believe in’ ... that’s really encouraging.”

“I think it gives us a future. And I hope to be a part of it.” 



The Wong family (from left): Luke, Judy, Katharine, Alexandra, Caroline, and Tai

My View

Why Boys Don't Belong In My Sport

By Alanna Smith

Let's race!" This plea came from my twin brother, Nicholas, pretty much every day when we were 5 or 6 years old. We'd pick a spot in our backyard, plant our feet side by side, and take off across the grass.

"Let's go again!" my competitive brother would call out as soon as we'd had a minute to catch our breath.

So we raced again ... and again ... and again.

You might say this was a preview of my life today, as a high school athlete: running every day, always trying to win.

Except in high school, I don't race against boys. Or at least I didn't ... until someone changed the rules.

The first glimpse of my athletic ability came when I was in first grade. My mom entered me in a one-mile race for a school fundraiser, and I came in second to a fifth grader. I'd never run a mile before. My mom still talks about watching me cross the finish line with a long line of kids trailing behind me.

But I didn't get serious about running until sixth grade, when I joined the track team at my middle school in Danbury, Connecticut. I'd run track the year before, and enjoyed it. I loved the feeling of accomplishment when I pushed myself to run a little faster every day. But middle school brought a new level of competition, because now I would be racing against older kids.

My focus was short-distance running: the 100-meter, the 200-meter and the 400-meter. I became the 100-meter Connecticut state champion, beating even seventh and eighth graders to win my race. That's when it hit me: I was *good* at this. I knew if I kept training and worked hard, I could keep winning in high school. And maybe even beyond that.

I joined the Danbury High School track team, and broke a school record in the 400-meter my freshman year.

I won a handful of medals that year, and met my goal to win the 400 at the state championship. I was proud of that achievement. When a local paper ran an article about my successful season, I found out that some had called me "the sprinter of all sprinters."

Then a new competitor came along. Toward the end of my freshman year, two years ago, I found out I would be racing at the Connecticut State Open against a male who identifies as a girl. I couldn't believe it. I'd spent the year working on endurance, speed, and strength, but I had little chance of beating the physical strength of a biological male.

I make sacrifices to be good at my sport. My team has practice six days a week, and I also do runs on my own — constantly working to shave fractions of seconds off my race times. I don't stay out late on Friday nights, like a lot of my classmates do, because I have to wake up early for Saturday practice. When practice is canceled, as it often is during the snowy Connecticut winters, I find a place — indoors or out — where I can keep up with my sprints.

The thrill of competing against girls like myself who train hard is rewarding. I compete to be the best, to be the fastest, to be a champion on a level playing field. But it's hard to ignore the physical differences between us and biological males when they are lined up with us in the starting blocks. Mentally, we know the outcome before the race even starts.

It just isn't fair for anyone born male to compete against girls. That unfairness doesn't go away because of what someone believes about their gender identity.

WATCH See Alanna tell her story in her own words at ADFLegal.org/fj-Alanna

I compete to be the best, to be the fastest, to be a champion on a level playing field.

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Alanna Smith

It's hard to ignore the physical differences between us and biological males when they are lined up with us in the starting blocks.

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Alanna Smith

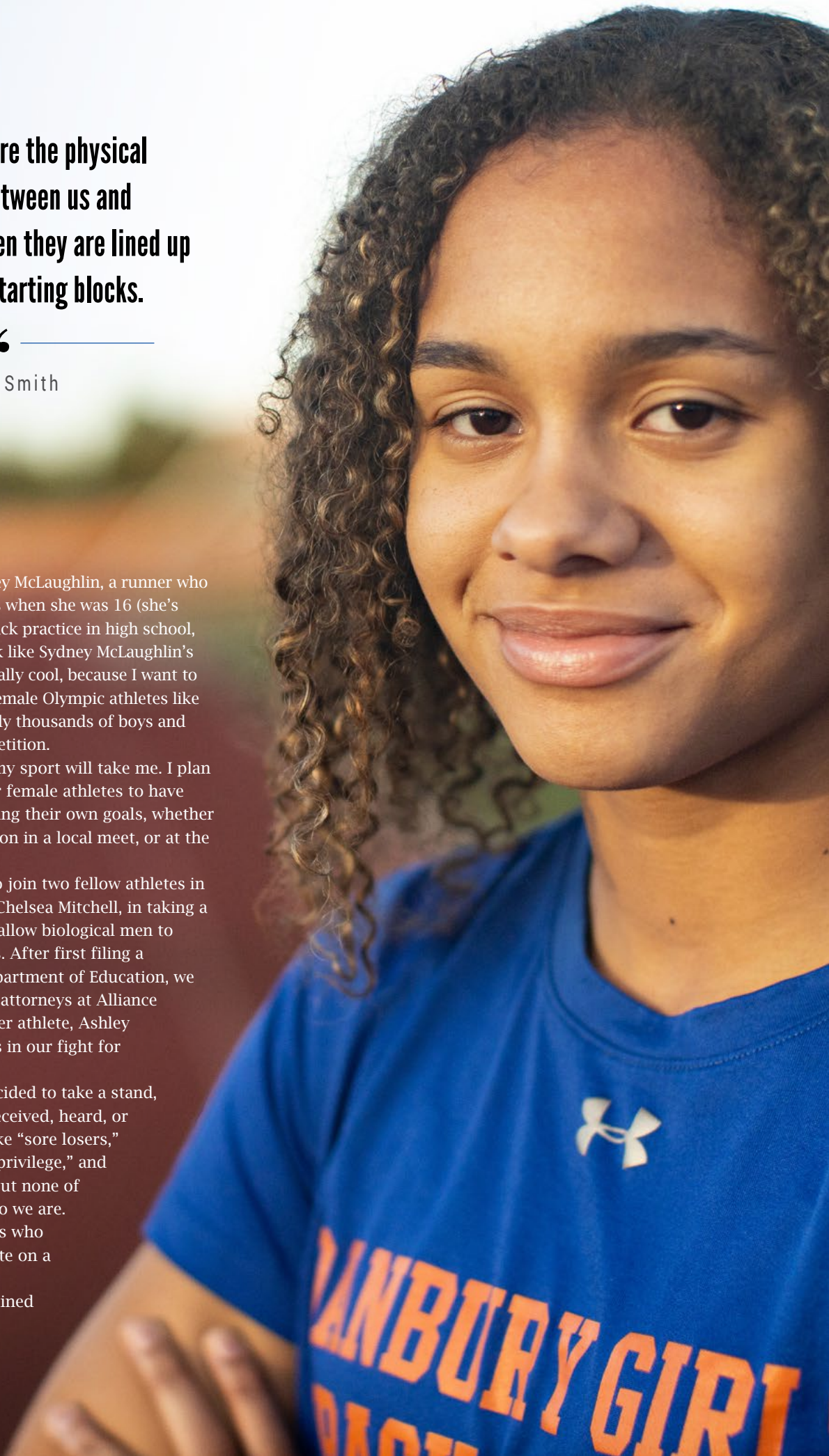
My role model is Sydney McLaughlin, a runner who went to the Olympics when she was 16 (she's now 21). During my first track practice in high school, someone told me, “You look like Sydney McLaughlin's twin.” And I said, “That's really cool, because I want to be just like her.” But even female Olympic athletes like Sydney would lose to literally thousands of boys and men in direct athletic competition.

I want to see how far my sport will take me. I plan to go pro. And I want other female athletes to have their best chance at achieving their own goals, whether that's victory and recognition in a local meet, or at the national level.

That's why I decided to join two fellow athletes in my state, Selina Soule and Chelsea Mitchell, in taking a stand against policies that allow biological men to compete in women's sports. After first filing a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education, we filed a lawsuit through our attorneys at Alliance Defending Freedom. Another athlete, Ashley Nicoletti, has also joined us in our fight for fairness.

Since the four of us decided to take a stand, we and our parents have received, heard, or read negative comments like “sore losers,” “transphobes,” “white-girl privilege,” and “suck it up, train harder.” But none of those comments reflect who we are. We are focused competitors who deserve a chance to compete on a level playing field.

We should not be sidelined in our own sports. 🏃



Q & A

Madeleine Kearns

Shining a Spotlight on Transgender Ideology

By Maureen Collins

A native of Glasgow, Scotland, Madeleine Kearns is a staff writer at National Review and a contributor to The Spectator, with a particular focus on transgender ideology and its effects on women, children, and society at large. Her work has appeared in The Wall Street Journal, The Daily Telegraph, The Daily Mail, The Scotsman, and The Catholic Herald. She is also an acclaimed vocalist. She lives in New York City.

The first thing that strikes you about Kearns is how bright and cheerful she is. You would never suppose she spends her days reporting on the controversial and harrowing issues surrounding sex and gender. Anyone looking for an honest, critical look at the rise of transgender ideology could benefit from her perspective.

F&J: What drew you to the topic of transgender ideology?

MK: In 2018, I read a paper by [physician and researcher] Lisa Littman highlighting an unprecedented number of teen girls who were thinking that they were boys. This was a dispassionate medical paper, and yet it was met with vitriol and accusations of transphobia. I was initially interested from the free speech angle. But then I thought, “Gosh, *this* is the story! Free speech is really important, but what is going on here?” And as I started looking into it, I discovered two things: The first was that I had the editorial support to look into this, find the answers, and then report the answers accurately. The other thing that struck me was that this was just so much worse than it looked superficially. The problem was so much deeper and so much more widespread.

F&J: Have you experienced any personal attacks or faced backlash for anything you’ve written about this subject?

MK: I probably have closed off certain professional opportunities. The personal attacks I get are mostly from

fringe activists. I was raised to have a sort of “sticks and stones” attitude, so most of that just rolls off the shoulder. But I think the real cost of this issue for me has been personal, in the sense that I’ve always enjoyed having friendships with people who hold different views. And I am sad to say that I have lost friends over my reporting on this issue.

F&J: Does that make you take a step back and reevaluate?

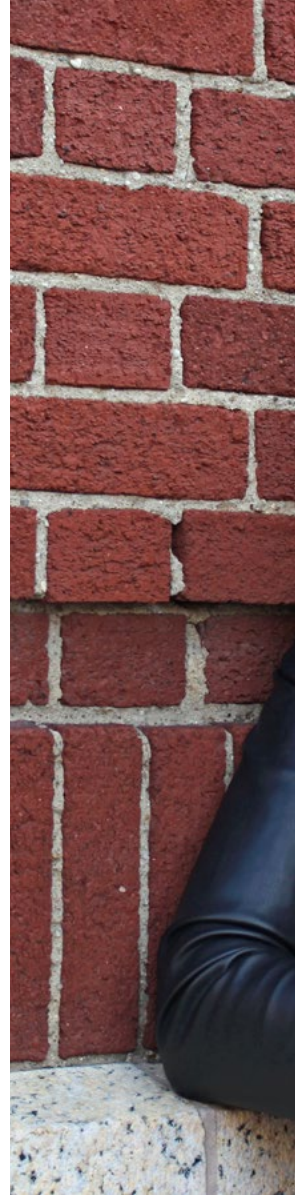
MK: It absolutely does make me reflect again and again on why I’m doing this. Because this feels like thankless work, in a way. But I try to be guided by what is the right thing to do, rather than what is convenient. Could I use my skill set, my talents for something else? Sure, I could. But I see the transgender issue as being an area where I am uniquely positioned, at least for now, to make a difference in something that really does matter.

F&J: From a faith standpoint, how important is it to you to be able to speak about what’s going on?

MK: I try to make arguments in a way that I think anybody could agree with them. Because there are certain things I believe as a Christian which I know are going to be unpersuasive to other people who are not Christians. But it’s not fundamentally, in the social-secular context, a religious issue. It’s a biological issue. It’s a scientific issue. It’s an issue that affects everybody, because society is structured partly on an understanding of the fact that men and women are biologically distinct. But my faith serves to remind me not to be invested in what people think of me, but to be invested in my conscience instead.

F&J: You’re from the U.K. Do you see what’s happening there as a forecast of what will happen in the U.S.?

MK: I think that in some ways, the pushback against transgender ideology is going to be easier in the U.K. The U.S. is just so much bigger, and every state is going to have a slightly different way of handling this. I think the size and the structure of the U.K. makes it easier for people to have access to the information of what’s actually going on. I also think that because there isn’t a





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Madeleine Kearns

living, breathing religious right in the U.K., the opposition to transgender ideology is more visibly nonpartisan. And we've seen some significant legal wins like the case with Keira Bell, who underwent irreversible transgender treatment as a teenager. In response to her lawsuit, the High Court in England ordered a moratorium on puberty

blockers and cross-sex hormones for minors because the judges deemed that minors could not truly consent to such treatments. That's highly encouraging.

F&J: You've said recently that America is on the brink of a “gender nightmare.” Can you explain what you mean by that?

MK: I was probably talking in the context of the administration that's just come in. This administration has been very explicit in its desire to push the most radical form of the transgender policy agenda as soon as practically possible. And I think we're going to find this total lack of media scrutiny. In the U.S., the media's coverage is basically indistinguishable from the transgender lobby groups, and it's actually very difficult to make what is happening publicly known.

F&J: How can we get the message out on these issues, with the mainstream media against us?

MK: People vastly underestimate how much of a difference they can make interpersonally, one on one. I remember being at a party, about a year before I'd written a word about any of this, when a really kind lady who worked as a teacher began telling me how groundbreaking and wonderful it was that a child at her school had begun medically transitioning genders. I told her straight up that I thought it was dangerous nonsense to suggest that a child could make a decision of that magnitude. And then — I kid you not! — she looked over her shoulder and confessed in a quiet voice that that's what she had thought, too, only she assumed she was mad for thinking it because no one dared to say it out loud. If teachers, parents, and community leaders were just to say, with charity and truthfulness, “You know, I don't believe that, and here's why” — maybe we wouldn't be in such a mess.

F&J: Do you see any reasons to hope in this area?

MK: Yes, I do. I'll give you two reasons. The first is the U.K. I think that the U.K. is going to win this legally and culturally before the U.S. does. And then I think it's only a matter of time before we have big lawsuits in the U.S. There are Keira Bells here in the U.S., and they're going to come forward. And the other reason for hope is the sports issue in the U.S. has really gotten people thinking about this. We saw Martina Navratilova, who is very much a progressive, and others from the left getting involved in this. Those are two very big reasons for hope. 🦋

For Kearns' most recent writings, follow her on Twitter @madeleinekearns.



Opinion

Can The Government Force Nonprofits To Disclose Donors?

By John Bursch

Giving to your favorite charity isn't as safe as it used to be. In 2012, California's attorney general ordered all nonprofits that fundraise in the state to disclose the names and addresses of their top donors ... then failed to keep that information confidential.

Such revelations can be hazardous to donors — not only to wealthy contributors, but also to small givers. That's a problem that I and my colleagues at Alliance Defending Freedom address in the opening brief we filed with the U.S. Supreme Court in *Thomas More Law Center v. Rodriguez*.

The dangers of donor disclosure

When your private donation is made public, that donation may be used against you in a variety of ways. This practice is known as “doxing” — broadcasting private information about an individual for the purpose of inciting harassment and vigilantism. It can result in picketing, public shaming, and even the loss of employment.

When the government does this, the practice is a First Amendment violation. Here, the California attorney general's office insists that information on those giving to charities is meant for staff eyes only. But the office has leaked that confidential data like a sieve, failing to protect it against online access. That makes it easy for third parties to retrieve and publicize donors' names, addresses, places of employment, and how much they gave.

The attorney general's office says it needs confidential donor information to adequately police charities and prevent donor fraud. But officials within the department have admitted under oath that such information is never used to initiate investigations and rarely used at all.

The Thomas More Law Center is a Michigan-based nonprofit that defends and promotes religious freedom, moral and family values, and the sanctity of human life. Roughly 5% of its donors are California residents, and for many years, it operated as a charity in good standing with the state's attorneys general.

That changed when the attorney general's office suddenly began demanding the names and addresses of the law center's major donors — information the group was reluctant to provide, since some of those donors, as well as the center's clients and employees, have faced

When your private donation is made public, that donation may be used against you in a variety of ways.

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John Bursch

Every American – whatever their political or social views – should be free to support causes they believe in without fear of harassment or intimidation.

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John Bursch

intimidation, death threats, hate mail, boycotts, and even assassination attempts from ideological opponents.

Sally Kern, a former Oklahoma state legislator and a Thomas More client, received death threats and was inundated with vulgar emails for speaking publicly about groups promoting same-sex lifestyles. During one tumultuous week, she received 30,000 hateful emails and calls. Some messages said Kern “should be killed,” that “Christianity should be eliminated,” and prayed that she would “rot in hell.” Her ideological opponents also harassed many of her political donors. Predictably, some of them quit contributing.



Thomas More Law Center President Richard Thompson (center) with TMLC staff members. The law center is challenging California's demands for disclosure of private donor information.

A look back at privacy protections

California's attorney general continues to insist on collecting unnecessary confidential information with great potential to harm donors. This insistence forced Alliance Defending Freedom to ask the U.S. Supreme Court to hear the law center's case, which the court agreed to do. The key precedent is the Supreme Court's 1958 decision in *NAACP v. Alabama*, a ruling that protected the NAACP from having to reveal its supporters in response to a government demand.

NAACP and its legal progeny have long recognized that the First Amendment protects the confidentiality of individuals who associate with and provide monetary support for nonprofit organizations.

More than 60 years later, that kind of privacy and legal protection is still very much needed in a deeply divided culture. Yet California law provides no penalties for employees, contractors, or even summer interns at the

attorney general's office who publicly disclose confidential donor information.

Every American — whatever their political or social views — should be free to support causes they believe in without fear of harassment or intimidation. It's time to restore the privacy of generous, engaged citizens. And for political opponents to think outside the dox. **A**

John Bursch is vice president of appellate advocacy and senior counsel for ADF.

This article was adapted from a column that originally appeared in The Detroit News on February 28, 2021.

WATCH Learn why every American has the right to donate privately at ADFLegal.org/tj-privacy



TODAY'S PLAN is TOMORROW'S PROMISE

"I am grateful for the work ADF is doing to protect religious freedom in the U.S. and around the world ... and for my children and grandchildren. What better legacy could there be to invest in?"

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