

# FAITH & JUSTICE

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In A Hostile Culture

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## Show And Tell

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make choices — and take stands

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May 2022  
Vol. XV, Issue 2

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Minutes With Michael

Standing Up To An Angry Mob

By Michael Farris, President and CEO

In our current culture, we are no longer surprised when people representing true freedom are heckled. But when my colleague Kristen Waggoner spoke at Yale Law School, she never expected to face bullying, harassment, and physical intimidation in a law school classroom.

After all, she had been invited there to discuss civil discourse.

Kristen, general counsel of Alliance Defending Freedom, was a member of a panel of speakers invited to discuss how attorneys across the ideological spectrum can come together in support of free speech. Joining her on the panel was another lawyer, a progressive atheist from the American Humanist Association. The two had shared common ground on a U.S. Supreme Court civil rights case.



There was nothing controversial about the topic. But the room erupted as soon as Kristen was introduced. Signs came out (many with messages that can't be printed here), and the mob of nearly 120 law students began to hurl insults, make obscene gestures, pound on classroom walls, and shout her down. The panelists required an armed police escort for them to safely exit the event.

What happened at Yale — and what has happened to other Christian and conservative speakers across the country — is disturbing. This event shows that legal protections for free speech are little comfort if we don't value free speech ... if we heckle, shout down, and punish anyone who has ideas we don't like.

"It was alarming to witness law students whipped into a frenzy, preferring to chant, pound the walls, and intimidate others rather than engage in civil dialogue," Kristen said. But she also said she'd be happy to return. Her courage and calm in the face of the mob is exactly what our country needs more of.

Many of our clients share Kristen's courage as they defend their right to speak freely. In this issue of Faith & Justice, you'll read about high school teacher Monica Gill, who is standing against a Loudoun County Public School policy that requires teachers to bring harmful ideologies into the classroom. (See story, p. 9)

You'll also learn about web designer Lorie Smith, who is subject to a Colorado law that forces artists to create and communicate messages that violate their beliefs. Her case is currently before the Supreme Court. (See story, p. 4)

Free speech and freedom of thought are the cornerstones of all free societies. Our other freedoms go as they do. So, what must we do? Like Kristen, Monica, and Lorie, stand up. Speak up. Show up. All it takes is a little courage to show the mob that you will not bow to their demands.

VISIT  
ADFlegal.org/prayer to learn how you can be involved in praying for free speech victories and other Generational Wins.

This event shows that legal protections for free speech are little comfort if we don't value free speech.

“

Michael Farris



## News & Quick Takes

Case Updates From Around The World

### Greeneville, Tennessee

A Tennessee Christian children's home has filed a federal lawsuit against the Biden administration to challenge its rule that requires the agency to violate its religious beliefs or lose needed funding.

ADF attorneys represent Holston United Methodist Home for Children, which has cared for more than 8,000 abused and neglected children in East Tennessee and Southwest Virginia through its residential and foster care services.



Holston Home receives some reimbursement for child-placement services through Title IV-E funding from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. But HHS issued a rule in 2016 that forced faith-based child-placement agencies to violate their religious beliefs by placing children in homes that do not align with their faith, such as non-Christian families, same-sex couples, or cohabitating couples.

HHS issued religious exemptions to this rule during the Trump administration, but the agency recently rescinded the exemptions.

### Los Angeles, California

ADF attorneys representing a Christian physician and the Christian Medical & Dental Associations are suing the state of California after it enacted a law that requires doctors to participate in physician-assisted suicide against their religious convictions and professional ethics.

California legalized physician-assisted suicide in 2015 with its passage of the controversial End of Life Options Act. Recently, the state legislated to force conscientious physicians to participate in the process — ignoring

### Albemarle County, Virginia

A diverse group of Virginia parents and their children have filed a lawsuit challenging Albemarle County Public Schools' discriminatory "Anti-Racism Policy." ADF is representing the five families in the case.

In 2019, the school board enacted a policy based in critical race theory, a radical ideology that views everything and everybody through the lens of race. The policy violates students' civil and constitutional rights by treating them differently based on race and by compelling them to affirm and support ideas contrary to their deeply held moral and religious beliefs.

The policy also squelches debate on the issue by mislabeling any opinion not aligned with its radical ideology as "racist" and threatens to punish dissent based on its redefinition of "racism."

"The school board's so-called 'Anti-Racism Policy' is in fact racist itself," says ADF Senior Counsel Kate Anderson, director of the ADF Center for Parental Rights. "It mandates teaching children to judge others based on race instead of character."

Read more about critical race theory on p. 21.



**The school board's so-called 'Anti-Racism Policy' is in fact racist itself.**

— “ —  
Kate Anderson  
ADF Senior Counsel

medical-ethics consensus that no physician should be forced to participate in physician-assisted suicide even where the practice is allowed.

"No health care professional should be forced to act against their religious beliefs and medical ethics, and the state of California is wrong to enforce such coercion," says ADF Senior Counsel Denise Harle, director of the ADF Center for Life.

CMDA is a national association of conscientious Christian health care professionals whose personal religious convictions and professional ethics oppose the practice of assisted suicide. Dr. Leslee Cochrane, a member of CMDA and a California-licensed physician, is also joining the lawsuit.



### Free Speech Case Headed To Supreme Court

The U.S. Supreme Court will hear the case of an artist subject to a Colorado law that forces her to design and publish websites celebrating same-sex weddings if she also creates websites celebrating the marriage of a man and a woman.

ADF attorneys represent the web designer, Lorie Smith of 303 Creative, who faces investigations, fines, and other punishments if she does not comply with the Colorado law. The law also bars her from explaining on her own company's website what messages she can create consistent with her religious beliefs.

The 10th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled 2-1 against Smith, taking the extreme position that the government may force an artist to create expressive content even if that artist's "pure speech" violates her faith. This result, which the dissenting 10th Circuit judge called "Orwellian," arose from the same law that continues to threaten Colorado cake artist Jack Phillips.

"Colorado has weaponized its law to silence speech it disagrees with, to compel speech it approves of, and to punish anyone who dares to dissent," says ADF General Counsel Kristen Waggoner.

Sixteen states, 45 members of Congress, and numerous legal scholars, economists, publishers, media organizations, and others have filed friend-of-the-court briefs in support of Smith's petition.

**Colorado's law — and others like it — are a clear and present danger to the very existence of a diverse and free nation.**

— “ —  
Kristen Waggoner  
ADF General Counsel

### Bulgaria

Two Bulgarian pastors are standing up against a scaremongering campaign by their local government to label all non-Orthodox Christians as sects and warn children off against them.

In 2008, the City Council of Burgas, together with the police, sent a letter to all school administrators in the city. In the letter, they made slanderous accusations against evangelical Christians and instructed faculty to "inform" children of the danger they pose. At the same time, the media also began to report that evangelical Christians are dangerous cults and sectarians, and that people should be very careful.



Pastors Radoslav Kiryakov (left) and Zhivko Tonchev.

**After the fall of communism, we thought that we would be able to share the Gospel freely.**

— “ —  
Pastor Radoslav Kiryakov

Pastor Radoslav Kiryakov and Pastor Zhivko Tonchev went to court to challenge the accusations, but the government did not retract the letter. Their case is now being heard by the European Court of Human Rights. ADF International is representing the pastors in the case.

### Ireland

Daniel and Amy McArthur, owners of Ashers Bakery in Northern Ireland, celebrated a sweet victory when the UK Supreme Court upheld their freedom of conscience following a seven-year legal battle.

In 2014, Gareth Lee, a member of an LGBT group called QueerSpace, asked the bakery to create a cake with the phrase "Support Gay Marriage" iced on top. The McArthurs politely declined his request, explaining that the message would contradict their Christian beliefs on marriage.

Ashers had served Lee in the past, and the owners have said they would happily serve him again. But Lee sued the bakery for discrimination, backed by the taxpayer-funded Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.



Amy and Daniel McArthur

In 2018, the UK Supreme Court unanimously held that the bakery had acted lawfully. Lee then took his case to the European Court of Human Rights, where ADF International intervened in support of conscience. In January, the court dismissed the attempt to reverse the Supreme Court's decision.



## Special Feature

# Ministry Alliance Offers Christian Organizations Dependable Help In A Changing Culture

By Chris Potts

The conversations almost always begin with a question.

*“We have a local political candidate we’d like to invite as a speaker...”*

*“We have a child in our school who doesn’t want to follow our code of conduct as it relates to biblical morality ...”*

*“We have a contract we’re looking at, and we’re not sure about some of these terms ...”*

The questions are at the center of dozens of calls that pour in every week, from all over the country, to the attorneys and staff of ADF’s Ministry Alliance. The team serves as a complement and counterpart to ADF’s Church Alliance, which concentrates on meeting the legal concerns of congregations and church leaders.

The Ministry Alliance, meanwhile, focuses on the challenges facing non-church groups: faith-based schools, camps, shelters, and other outreaches.

Members benefit from the Alliance’s belief that the best defense is a good offense. Recent years have seen a ramp-up in legal assaults on Christian ministries, and attorneys like Ryan Tucker, director of the ADF Center for Christian Ministries, are trying to help those organizations brace for the possibility that they, too, may become the target in a woke society’s crosshairs.

“Things can change so quickly,” Tucker says, “literally, overnight. Seemingly basic civil rights are suddenly threatened by the stroke of a governor’s

pen. There is high value in being proactive, being prepared, instead of letting the cards fall where they may, later on, and us trying to pick up the pieces.

“There is a push to enter into legal spaces that the opposition previously didn’t mess with,” Tucker says, citing Christian schools, employment practices, and biblical counseling as examples. “All the more reason why every religious organization should be prepared now.”

Bethel Christian Academy, a private Christian school in Savage, Maryland, is Exhibit A for how quickly and completely a Christian ministry can be blindsided by hostile officials.

Bethel serves about 225 pre-K through eighth grade students, most of them minorities from low-income families, representing as many as 40 different nations. Several years ago, the school’s administrators applied to

participate in a state voucher program. The application was approved, opening up crucial financial aid for families who otherwise could not afford private education.

That vital support vanished when state officials saw in the Bethel handbook a note on the school’s Christian beliefs — including marriage as the union of one man and one woman, and expectations that students refrain from sexual conduct. The state not only kicked Bethel out of the voucher program — it demanded immediate repayment of the \$102,600 already given to the school.

ADF attorneys offered to help. In time, they were able to win a crucial lawsuit that preserved the school’s religious freedom and absolved it from having to repay the previous funds.

“ADF has been a huge blessing to us,” says Claire Dent, Bethel’s principal. “They were sincerely interested in helping our school.”

“Every time we met with them, they prayed for us,” says Dr. Johnny Green, senior pastor and CEO of Bethel Ministries. “Asked how our church was doing, how our people were doing. They cared so much about us. They kept us well informed, made us feel that ‘we are in this with you.’”

Like Bethel, Downtown Hope Center in Anchorage, Alaska, was caught off guard by the culture. During the day, the Christian ministry serves meals to the homeless; by night, it offers shelter to women in need of refuge, many of whom have suffered severe physical, emotional, and sexual abuse.

## None of us knows when a legal issue may arise. What’s becoming apparent is that, in the current culture, it’s not ‘if,’ but ‘when.’

“

Ryan Tucker, Director  
ADF Center for Christian Ministries



Claire Dent

Three years ago, Anchorage officials acted on a complaint by a man who had demanded the right to stay overnight at the women-only shelter. ADF attorneys successfully defended the Center in federal court, but officials then amended a city ordinance in an attempt to circumvent the ruling, forcing the shelter to once again head back to court.

According to Sherrie Laurie, executive director of the Hope Center, certain city officials made it clear that their objections to the ministry’s religious beliefs outweigh any concerns for the women being served there.

“They know we do a really good work here,” she says. “They’d like us to be more ... accommodating of their agenda. They’re not so sure about God being involved in what we do.

“We would never be here now but that ADF came to our defense,” she says. “ADF has a culture of honor, with each other, toward their clients, even in how they handle the people that the lawsuit is against. They’re my heroes.”



Three ministries served by the Ministry Alliance: Downtown Hope Center (left), Bethel Christian Academy (center), IdRaHaJe Christian Camp (right)



“Faith-based nonprofits should be free to serve consistently with their faith without fear of unjust government punishment,” says Tucker. “This situation is not limited to Anchorage — it’s a broader concern for the nation as a whole, and certainly for faith-based institutions that clearly make their positions known to their community.”

The owners and management of IdRaHaJe (“I’D RATHER HAVe Jesus”) Christian Camp have certainly made their priorities clear. For nearly 75 years, the 262-acre retreat in Bailey, Colorado, just west of Denver, has been offering fun and adventure to children, youth, and families: everything from horseback riding to rock-, rope-, and wall-climbing, arts and crafts to archery.

But IdRaHaJe also offers the Gospel — last year alone, 311 youngsters signed the huge (2 feet by 3 feet) “Book of Life,” saying they’d asked Jesus into their heart during their stay at the camp.

Director Mike DeBoer says the current climate concerns him. “Obviously, there’s lots of things going on out there,” he says. “It’s becoming more challenging. We’re trying to be proactive and say, ‘How we can be good stewards of this ministry, solid in our stance on the Gospel and the Word of God?’”

Toward that end, DeBoer and his team recruited the Ministry Alliance to review the camp’s documents, policies, and procedures.

“The Ministry Alliance offers an invaluable tool,” he says. “They helped us solidify some things and made us feel more comfortable as a ministry with what’s next. There’s always new issues coming around the corner, and we look forward to working with ADF to help manage and navigate those things as well.”

“None of us knows when a legal issue may arise,” Tucker says.

“What’s becoming apparent is that, in the current culture, it’s not ‘if,’ but ‘when.’ In joining the Ministry Alliance, you’re helping keep doors open for the spread of the Gospel, through the unique setting of legal representation. And you’re helping your brothers and sisters in Christ who may have to fight the battle today.”

For information on how you can join the Ministry Alliance, call 833-233-2559 or visit [MinistryAlliance@ADFlegal.org](mailto:MinistryAlliance@ADFlegal.org).



Sherrie Laurie

# The Ministry Alliance offers four primary services to its members

- 1. Document review.** The wording of a ministry’s governing documents is crucial, Tucker says, because “you can’t avail yourself of religious freedom if it’s not clear that, indeed, you are religious.” ADF attorneys peruse all key documents to ensure that they clearly reflect an organization’s commitment to biblical principles.
- 2. Legal resources.** ADF offers a variety of materials — brochures, one-pagers, resource guides, webinars — with clear answers to the most common questions ministry leaders ask, on everything from hiring practices to guest speakers to appropriate use of facilities.
- 3. Legal consultation.** Some questions are more nuanced, and ministry leaders often want to talk through specific situations and circumstances. ADF offers the thoughtful personal guidance of its attorneys’ collective experience in thinking through these issues.
- 4. Pro bono representation.** When necessary and as appropriate, ADF attorneys will represent a ministry in the crosshairs free of charge, though representation can also include detailed legal advice or linking an organization with a local Allied Attorney.

For these services, Alliance members pay an annual fee; funds go to cover the legal costs for Alliance member organizations forced to litigate their concerns. “You contribute, you become part of the mission,” Tucker says, “providing resources to help your own ministry and others prepare for what may lie ahead. When the enemy comes knocking at your door, you’re prepared for that battle.”



Barbara Lyons

## Alliance Profile Barbara Lyons

By Dustin Hobbs

After a lifelong career, many look forward to the relaxation that comes with retirement. Days spent on the golf course. Sleepovers with grandkids. Long lunches with old friends.

After 40 years in the trenches of the pro-life movement, Barbara Lyons’ retirement lasted just two weeks.

That’s when she received a call from Patients’ Rights Action Fund (PRAF), a non-partisan advocacy organization focused on protecting the rights of patients and doctors from the increasingly dangerous physician-assisted suicide movement. Lyons had connected with those working on the assisted-suicide issue during her time at Wisconsin Right to Life, where she served for nearly 40 years, the last 28 as executive director.

Lyons had always been passionate about protecting and defending life, but felt there was a “gap in attention to end-of-life issues.” She recognized the opportunity to make a difference at a crucial time for the movement.

Her simple explanation for the sudden shift from retirement back into advocacy work: “I wasn’t done yet.”

Though PRAF was a younger organization, Lyons realized the importance of its work. The push from proponents of assisted suicide was a literal matter of life

# Caring for her husband through an extended illness gave Barbara Lyons an intense level of sympathy for the terminally ill.

and death. These advocates, she says, have ambitious plans to extend physician-assisted suicide far beyond its current reach. As of 2022, 10 states (plus the District of Columbia) now allow physician-assisted suicide, including heavily populated states like California and New Jersey.


Lyons’ shift in focus from start-of-life to end-of-life work was about more than simple ideology. She had spent the previous few years caring for Patrick, her husband of 56 years, as he suffered through an extended illness that eventually took his life. Going through that process gave Lyons an intense level of sympathy for the terminally ill, as well as the family members who care for them until the end.

“It gave me a better understanding of what they were experiencing, because I was experiencing it myself,” she says.

In her new role as Coalitions Director for PRAF, Lyons began to draw together diverse groups to create a unified front against assisted-suicide bills in an increasing number of states. From faith-based organizations to disability-focused groups to professional medical groups to Native American tribes, Lyons works to educate policy makers on the threat assisted suicide poses.

She warns that the issue has been “creeping up” on the public, with few understanding why so many patients are drawn to suicide or the dangers of experimental, ever-changing lethal drug cocktails prescribed by medical professionals. She also notes that physician-assisted suicide simply “distorts” the life-preserving nature of medicine itself.

After seven years at PRAF, Lyons remains optimistic and just as committed to fighting for the rights of patients and doctors. She points to the large network of state and local organizations and advocates who have joined the movement in recent years.

Lyons also finds herself invigorated by the blending of her decades of experience with the youthful energy and passion of the organization’s staff. “They’re all so young!” she chuckles. 

**LEARN** how ADF is standing up against the dangers of physician-assisted suicide. Visit [adflegal.org/fj-PAS](https://adflegal.org/fj-PAS).



Cover Story

# Show And Tell

Activists are compelling teachers to make choices — and take stands

By Chris Potts

It's every child's nightmare. A rough-and-tumble gang of mean-spirited kids, roaming the corridors and playgrounds, dodging teachers and administrators, singling you out for bullying and some highly personalized terrorism.

Sometimes, nightmares come true. Monica Gill knows. One day, in a lower-middle-class middle school in Rockville, Maryland, the gang came for her.

"I don't know why they picked me as a target," she says, "but it was a pretty brutal experience." For months, she remembers, "they would hunt me down in the halls, run over me — literally, run over me — knock me down, knock all of my books down, then laugh and say, 'Oh, I didn't see you.'" With the physical attacks came the

taunting and teasing, name-calling and threats.

The assaults climaxed one day when the whole group surrounded Monica at her locker. They were inducting a new member into the gang and, as the rest closed in around her, the newbie grabbed Monica's hair and slammed her head hard against a locker. They left her there, sobbing.

A teacher came along; he demanded to know what had happened. She was afraid to tell him, but, "I was just a mess," she says. Next day, in the school lunchroom, he summoned her over to where he was standing. "I want you to point every single one of those kids out to me," he said.

Terrified, Monica begged him not to make her do that. He wouldn't relent, though. "Point the finger at every kid," he said. "We can't let this go on. You have to tell me exactly who this is."

It was like a bad-dream version of "show and tell," and "the most frightening experience of my life," Monica remembers. But she finally looked around and began pointing. One by one, the teacher called those she identified up to the front of the room to face him. "And they never bothered me again," she says.

Of course, even all these years later, groups still team up to mistreat children. Only, more often, it's the grown-ups doing the mistreating. And Monica, now a teacher herself, is one of those determined to call them out for what they're doing.



*Monica in high school*



**My No. 1 priority was for my students to know that they are loved — unconditionally — by at least one person in their life. And that needed to be me.**

“

Monica Gill

I actually knew I wanted to be a teacher from the time I was very young,” Monica says. “I used to play school with my brothers — actually make them do work and I’d grade it. Which, I think, is why they were not too fond of school.”

Early on, it was pretty clear that Monica herself preferred worlds outside the classroom. She was just 4 when her parents started her in kindergarten, and Monica remembers her earliest teachers being “exasperated, and probably rightly so. I was very much in la-la land ... more interested in fairy tales than in anything [they were] trying to impart to me.”

Still, “I loved all my teachers ... even when they didn’t love me that much,” she laughs. Once the fascination with teaching took hold, she grew to appreciate not only the skills required for the job, but the warmth and affection that her best instructors brought to their classrooms.

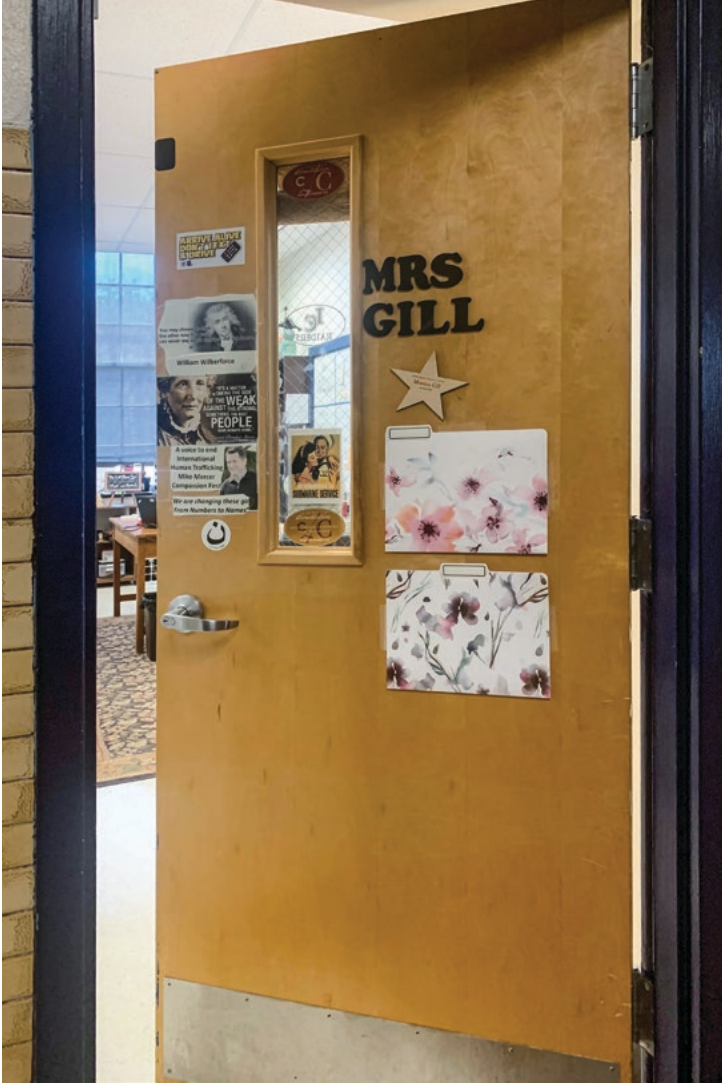
“They clearly loved and respected their students, and wanted the best for them, and were not just up at the board, teaching lessons. They knew what was going on in our lives. They connected with us, took special interest. Those were fond relationships — not just ‘I’m here to impart knowledge and pour it into your head, and then move you on to the next level.’

“It had a huge influence,” Monica says, “not only on my desire to teach, but on the kind of teacher I wanted to be.

“The Lord was a huge influence on that, too,” she adds. “I know He placed it on my heart when I started teaching that my No. 1 priority was for my students to know that they are loved — unconditionally — by at least one person in their life. And that needed to be me.

“Whatever I was teaching them, content-wise, was important ... but not as important as them knowing they had a teacher who loved them.”

The door to Monica’s classroom invites her students to a lively, welcoming learning environment. On the way out of class, they are reminded of a lesson that’s a vital part of her teaching: that they are unconditionally loved.



And so, Monica, who teaches history and government classes at Loudoun County High School in Leesburg, Virginia, greets her students each morning with a reminder that she loves them. She bids them farewell at day’s end the same way. In between, she works the assurance easily into casual conversations and lesson discussions, and signs off all their graded papers and quizzes with, “Mrs. Gill loves you.”

A stenciled message appears over her classroom door: “You are loved.” The stencil was a gift from another teacher — one who doesn’t share Monica’s faith, but recognizes the genuineness of her love for both God and her students. In time, most of her students come to understand that, too.

Near the end of each school year, Monica gets to wondering if she’s shown her students what she’s told them. She closes the last big quiz with a bonus question: “Why does Mrs. Gill tell you that she loves you?” She’s gotten some interesting answers.

“To be funny.” “Because it’s cute.” “Because she wants us to do well.” “Because we’re the coolest kids ever.” All kinds of things like that,” Monica says. “And then I have several who say, ‘Because she really does love us.’”

Sometimes, Monica worries that her constant refrains of love may have run their course ... grown stale or silly. Then she remembers another answer, from a boy who wrote, “Mrs. Gill tells me that she loves me to make up for my parents’ lack of love.”

And she starts showing and telling them all over again.

Monica teaches two classes of “academic level” U.S. history, designed to prepare students for college-level coursework. Trouble is, “a third of my kids in these classes cannot read above a fourth-grade level. *Cannot.*” Monica chalks that up to a number of things — mostly, perhaps, to a culture that’s increasingly more interested in coddling children than challenging them.

“We are so involved in this culture of feelings. We don’t want kids to have low self-esteem; we don’t want them to be hurt by being held back. And we’re paying the price for that mentality right now. I see kids who are suffering academically, and from mental health issues. That’s hard, because you’re trying to deal with both — and I don’t think we’re dealing with either effectively.

“I have so many more students now than I did 20 years ago who suffer from mental health issues: gender dysphoria, depression, anxiety, stress — even being hospitalized for those things. It’s heartbreaking. And it seems like the adults around these kids are not always helping them make the best decisions in navigating these issues.”

Monica has come to believe that her school district, like many others, “has been making decisions that seem far more ideological than really about what is best for kids.

“It’s been a slow crawl,” she says, describing some of those dubious decisions. Directing teachers not to grade homework, for instance, “because some kids don’t have any support at home. It’s not ‘fair.’ Not ‘equitable.’” But, of course, homework that won’t be graded is homework that won’t be done — so there’s no point in assigning it, Monica’s learned.

Other policies followed: “We’re not going to penalize students’ grades for being tardy, or being absent, or skipping class,” they tell us. “We’re not going to take points off if they don’t put their name on their papers. These are behaviors, and we shouldn’t be grading behavior.” More and more indulgences inspired less and less discipline, Monica says, and the challenge of learning fell by the way.

Then came the pressures to embrace critical race theory and, later, Policy 8040 — requiring all teachers, whatever their beliefs about biological sex and gender, to use the pronouns that transgender and “gender-expansive” students specify, regardless of their true biological sex.



**I’m a government teacher. I know that it is always wrong for government to mandate speech.**

“

Monica Gill



I love all of my students, but I will never lie to them ... I'm a teacher, but I serve God first.

“

Tanner Cross

“Which means,” Monica says, “that any kid, at any time, can make a gender claim, and I, as the teacher, have to accept that claim. If they are a boy, and say, ‘I was “Charlie,” but today, I’m “Cindy,” and I want you to use she / her pronouns for me,’ we are mandated that we have to participate in that. We have to use those pronouns. We have to accept and affirm that this boy is now a girl, or vice versa.”

That, Monica found, was the line she couldn’t cross.

“There are so many issues with that policy in particular that, as a teacher and as a Christian, were just untenable,” she says. “We’re supposed to be loving, respecting ... protecting and not harming.” And yet, “we’re compelled to say things we don’t agree with, that we don’t believe — things that aren’t true — to our kids.”

Monica was far from the only one feeling the frustration. At a Loudoun County School Board meeting last spring, another teacher — Leesburg Elementary physical education teacher Tanner Cross — became an instant lightning rod for the gathering storm of controversy when, speaking in his personal capacity, he eloquently expressed the concerns of a growing number of parents and teachers in the district:

“It is not my intention to hurt anyone,” he said. “But there are certain truths that we must face ... We condemn [these] policies [because they] damage children, defile the holy image of God. I love all of my students, but I will never lie to them ... I’m a teacher, but I serve God first. And I will not affirm that a biological boy can be a girl and vice versa, because it is against my religion. It’s lying to a child. It’s abuse to a child. And it’s sinning against our God.”

Monica was sitting in the audience, awaiting her own turn to speak. She had talked with Tanner at other meetings in recent weeks, and knew she had found a kindred spirit. Kim Wright, an English teacher at Smart’s Mill Middle School and the wife of a pastor at Monica’s church, decided she had, too. Both were stunned, two days later, when district officials placed Tanner on administrative leave while they investigated his alleged “disruptive impact.”

If the move was intended to intimidate Tanner — and other teachers, like Monica and Kim, who agreed with him — it quickly backfired. Alliance Defending Freedom attorneys filed suit on Tanner’s behalf against the district, and the Virginia Supreme Court ruled that Tanner’s constitutional rights had likely been violated. He was permanently restored to his teaching position.

When they learned that ADF would be amending Tanner’s lawsuit to directly challenge Policy 8040, both Kim and Monica asked to join him as plaintiffs in the case.

“Tanner and Kim and I all believe that lying to a kid is harming them,” Monica says. “It’s ultimately harmful to say, ‘Okay, yeah, you really are a girl now,’ or to use pronouns that don’t align with their biological sex.

“Words matter,” she says. “Words carry meaning. If I am forced to use a pronoun for a student that does not align with their biological sex, I am essentially conveying to that student that gender is fluid — and that’s not true. As a teacher who cares for her



From left to right:  
Kim Wright, Monica Gill,  
and Tanner Cross

students — as a Christian who believes firmly that all human beings are created in the image of God as either male or female — I can’t participate in that.

“I’m a government teacher. I know that it is always wrong for government to mandate speech. Micromanaging people’s pronouns, this is not the job of government.”

Her decision to join the lawsuit wasn’t made lightly. Two years ago, when CRT began to dominate teacher training programs, she asked to meet with her principal, who suggested Monica take her concerns directly to district officials. Monica wrote a letter to her superintendent and to those leading the district’s “equity initiative.” None of them replied.

So, she began attending — and speaking out at — school board and equity committee meetings. But officials weren’t listening, she says. “They did not seem to care at all about the concerns of teachers or parents. We were just talking to the air.”

Some people, though, took notice. A writer for *The Federalist* heard Monica speak at one of the increasingly volatile school board meetings. She invited Monica to write an opinion piece for the online magazine. Monica wrote two. Word spread fast. This time, her principal called her.

“You gave me a lot to think about,” she said. She also told Monica that, the day after the article was published, she had gone to the district’s HR office in person, to tell officials there, “they had better not try and do anything to you. I’m here,” she told Monica, “to protect you.”

“And she has,” Monica says, at least as far as her out-of-school writing is concerned. But Policy 8040 is another matter, and that puts Monica under threat of punishment right now.

Still, when a lawyer she spoke with connected her with an ADF attorney, she was relieved to find strong legal support. That’s when she learned ADF was also

representing Tanner in challenging the district’s Policy 8040. She decided to join the lawsuit.

“I just am so thankful to the Lord and for ADF, to have this group of people come around me and provide all of the expertise and resources and support I needed to take on this Goliath,” Monica says.

“You just feel like,

*‘I’m not getting anywhere, not going anywhere, not going to make it. This isn’t going to make a difference.’ And then, finally, you get someone on your side who says, ‘We’ve got you. We’ve got everything you need to take this fight to the next level and really make a stand for what’s right.’ That makes a huge difference.”*

I just am so thankful to the Lord and for ADF, to have this group of people come around me and provide all of the expertise and resources and support I needed to take on this Goliath.

“

Monica Gill





**School districts [are] adopting an ideological account of what human beings are — and forcing their employees to go along with it.**

“

Logan Spena, ADF Legal Counsel

A huge difference is exactly what’s needed, says Logan Spena, legal counsel with the ADF Center for Academic Freedom, and one of the attorneys representing Monica and her colleagues. Too many people, he says, underestimate the full breadth of what’s happening in places like Loudoun County.

“This is the government adopting an orthodoxy about the relationship between sex, gender, and human identity,” he says, “and forcing teachers to affirm that it’s true. These administrators are willingly adhering to

this idea, not just that a person can be a man *or* a woman, regardless of their biological sex ... but that human identity is not related to those categories at all. That you can identify as anything.” School officials are calling that idea “gender expansiveness.”

“This is not just a ‘live and let live’ kind of controversy,” Spena says. “This is school districts adopting an ideological account of what human beings are — and forcing their employees to go along with it. These officials are demanding that we accept and adhere to radical and harmful ideologies.”

For those not willing to do that, he says, now is the time to speak up. Many are persuaded that these schools’ transgender agendas are unstoppable, propelled by near-universal assent. “And that’s not the case,” Spena says. “In fact, most people *don’t* accept these ideas. The only reason there’s so much pressure to adhere is that so few people are willing to talk about it.

“In order to protect the lives of countless children,” he says, “it’s time for people who really don’t agree with this to talk about it.” That’s what makes Monica, Kim, and Tanner so remarkable, he says — not the rarity of their views, “but that they have the courage to stand.”

Left: Radio commentator Todd Starnes interviews Ryan Bangert, ADF Senior Counsel; and Monica Gill on the Todd Starnes Show.



Right: Monica takes part in a panel discussion on “Virginia’s Education Uprising” at the 2021 Pray Vote Stand Summit.



“This whole experience really has been a huge growth point and shift in my faith,” Monica says. “Prior to this ... I wouldn’t have considered myself a particularly courageous person.” But now?

“I’m really not afraid of anything anymore. I believe that the Lord has me. He is sovereign. He’s placed each one of us in the times that He’s placed us for a purpose. And, ‘if God is with us, who can be against us?’”

She reflects often on the late summer day, a few years ago, when that courage came to her. She was cleaning the dusty classroom she’d just inherited from a retiring fellow teacher. Feeling low, she remembers, and overwhelmed by all that she was seeing in the school system, and the dark impact it was having on the students she loved. She was looking for a way to leave.

“And I was praying ... saying, ‘Lord, I can’t do this anymore. It’s just too hard.’” Cleaning off a bookshelf, she found an old book stuffed back in the corner. “I picked it up, dusted it off, and looked at the cover. It said, *Holy Bible*.

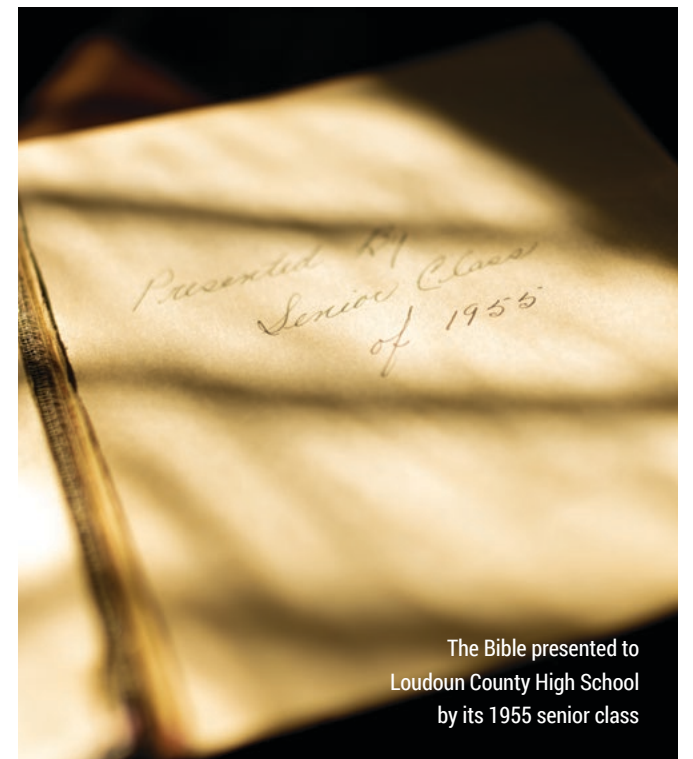
“I thought, ‘My goodness, what are *you* doing here?’ And then I opened it. On the inside cover was written, ‘Presented to Loudoun County High School from the Senior Class of 1955.’”

“My cynicism kicked in, and I thought, ‘We’ll never see anything like this again. This is terrible. Look at how far we’ve fallen.’ Then the Lord, just in that moment, got hold of my heart.

“I did not give you this gift for you to judge this place,’ He told me. ‘I gave you this gift so that you would know *I have not abandoned this place*. I have put you here for such a time as this. There are other Christians whom I have placed here for this time. I have not abandoned you. I have not abandoned public schools. I have not abandoned these children. You’re here to be My salt and light. So ... stay.’”

“And so — I’ve stayed. I have not been anxious since. He just removed all my fear.”

Which is what allows a teacher who’s always telling her students she loves them ... to step forward, and show them that it’s true. **A**



The Bible presented to Loudoun County High School by its 1955 senior class

**Most people don’t accept these ideas. The only reason there’s so much pressure to adhere is that so few people are willing to talk about it. In order to protect the lives of countless children, it’s time for people who really don’t agree with this to talk about it.**

“

Logan Spena, ADF Legal Counsel





My View

## I want to help young people. Why is my state standing in the way?

By Brian Tingley

“You must think I’m crazy.”

I hear this from time to time as people sit across from me in my office, pouring out private pain they don’t share with anyone else. As a professional counselor, I provide a safe environment for them to do that.

People come to me with difficulties of all kinds — marital conflict, anxiety, stress, anger management, and more. It’s enormously rewarding to listen, talk, and work with them to help them achieve their goals and see their lives transformed.

But my state doesn’t always like that. In fact, Washington has made it a crime for me to have certain conversations with people who want my help. I’m standing up for my right to provide that support.

**Washington has made it a crime for me  
to have certain conversations with people  
who want my help.**

“

Brian Tingley

Helping people is my ministry — though not the kind I had in mind when I first started preparing for a career.

I attended Bible college right after high school, thinking I might become a pastor. I had been a Christian most of my life, and my heart had always been to help people. At the same time, I didn’t feel like I was worthy of being a professional “good person.”

Instead, the first two decades of my career were spent in media, including a significant amount of time working in news production for a local network affiliate. Whenever I had the opportunity, I took assignments addressing the needs of youth, family, and community. I was part of a talented team, and we won numerous awards. After many rewarding years in that profession, I thought my career was set in stone. But then I reached a turning point.

At a church service one night, I was particularly convicted about giving my whole life to God. “I would do anything to be in Your will,” I prayed in that quiet moment. “I want You to have complete control of my life.” The next day, I was suddenly laid off. Although I’d loved my work, I wasn’t disappointed. Losing my TV job seemed like God’s way of telling me to take a different direction.

Becoming a counselor had been on my heart for a long time, but I had set the idea aside until then. I became a licensed marriage and family therapist and have been practicing for 20 years.

Over time, people began coming to me with struggles related to sexual orientation and gender identity. Even as a teenager, I was aware that some people wrestled with these issues — even Christians. And I knew they needed answers beyond, *“I’m a Christian, I believe, and I know what’s right.”* They needed practical guidance for their specific struggles, and after many hours of intentional study I became more skilled in how to help them.

I had the opportunity to counsel one teenage girl who came to me with her parents for guidance.

After being exposed to websites advocating

transgender identification for girls, she had begun to feel unhappy with her female gender and now claimed to be a boy. She was also facing social difficulties at school. She agreed to meet with me to talk about her struggles.

During our first appointments, I asked questions to help her open up and explore the deeper causes of her discomfort. I also practiced “sympathetic listening,” which is simply giving someone a safe place to speak freely. After a few of these sessions, she realized what she really wanted was to become more comfortable with her biological sex. Happily, we were able to make progress toward that goal. Over time, I also saw a great improvement in her demeanor, self-esteem, and overall well-being.

Shockingly, this type of gentle, exploratory conversation is now illegal in the state of Washington.

Washington has taken a very hard-line, ideologically driven position on what counselors are allowed to say about sexuality. In 2018, the state passed a law forbidding any conversation I might have with a minor

client with a goal to “change” that young person’s gender identity or sexual attractions. This applies even if the young person seeks my help in this area and sets the goals (and I always leave it to my clients to identify their own goals).

The law requires me to tell my client that his only option is to “accept” feelings that conflict with his religious beliefs or the life he wants. The state of Washington demands that I counsel him on the premise that reducing same-sex attraction or achieving comfort with his biological sex cannot be successful and will be harmful to him. If I violate this law, I could face crippling fines or even lose my professional license.

The government doesn’t belong in a counselor’s office. When clients come to me, they need to have the freedom to communicate their thoughts and feelings, and I need the freedom to guide them as they work toward their personal goals. Washington’s law gets in the middle of that. It says, *“No, you can’t talk about that, you can’t have that goal.”*

Many of my clients share my faith, and they value my counsel from a Christian perspective. But Washington is saying that I cannot believe what I believe as a Christian, and that anybody who would come to me wanting help as a Christian — that’s not OK. The state

only allows one viewpoint on matters of sexuality.


**The law requires me to tell my client  
that his only option is to “accept”  
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“

Brian Tingley

I’m tired of being expected to hide my beliefs or apologize for them. Whatever people believe about gender and sexuality, everyone should agree that the government should never censor the speech of those seeking help or those offering it.

I find great fulfillment in watching the people I counsel make progress toward their goals, and begin living the lives they want to lead. One day, after a particularly good session with a client, I was talking with my longtime mentor and searching for a way to put the elation I felt into words. “It feels like I won the Super Bowl,” I told him, “but I’m the only one that knows it.”

I want those wins for all of my clients. I just hope my state won’t stop that from happening. 

That’s why I decided to stand up for my rights both as a counselor and a Christian. With Alliance Defending Freedom’s representation, I sued the state of Washington in 2021.



Q & A

## Sandra Bucha

This Hall Of Fame Swimmer Is  
Fighting For Women's Sports — Again

By Caroline Roberts

**S**andra Bucha is a member of the International Swimming Hall of Fame and an attorney.

*As a high schooler in Illinois in the 1960s, Bucha trained on the boys' swim team since there were no high school swim teams for girls at that time. During her senior year in high school, Bucha filed a lawsuit against the Illinois High School Association, seeking the establishment of separate sports teams for girls. Although she did not prevail in her lawsuit, her efforts helped pave the way for the 1972 passage of Title IX, which provides equal athletic opportunities for women. Within two years, girls were competing on female swim teams at Bucha's high school.*

*After high school, Bucha joined the professional marathon swimming circuit, competing against men and women in her events. In her nine marathon swims between 1973 and 1975, she finished as the first woman in every event and consistently in the top three overall — including against men. In 2020, she was one of more than 300 female athletes who signed a letter to the NCAA asking it to defend equal opportunities for women in sports.*

*We spoke with Bucha about her experiences as a high school athlete before Title IX and about the transgender threat to women's sports.*

**F&J:** How old were you when you first learned to swim?

**SB:** My folks started me in swim practice when I was around 7 or 8, in Missouri. We moved to Illinois when I was 10, and I started training under a coach who developed my talent more intensely. I was around 13 when I began to compete in events throughout the United States.



Sandra Bucha

**F&J:** In high school you were allowed to train with the boys' swim team, but not to compete. Tell us about that experience.

**SB:** In 1968, I entered high school, along with a number of other young girls who were competitive swimmers. At the time, there were no girls' high school swim teams. Perhaps sensing this inequity, my swim coach told all of us girls that if any of us made the national AAU qualifying times, he would allow us to train with the boys' team. I was the only one that made the cutoff times, so I was the only girl allowed the privilege of training with the boys.

I would train hours every day, before and after school, and I was grateful for the opportunity. Still, I observed how the boys could participate in meets, with the thrill of the race and the excitement of spectators cheering them on. I, and other girls who used to swim with me, were part of a school group called "The Guard," which was created for the purpose of supporting the boy's swim team and cheering them on at meets. We were relegated to being spectators in the sport we loved.

Many young female athletes are ... afraid to voice their opinion, afraid to voice their belief that it's not fair to force them to compete against a boy or man.

“

Sandra Bucha

**F&J:** In your last year of high school, you decided to take a stand against this unfairness. What led to your lawsuit, and what was the outcome?

**SB:** My father saw all of this play out and knew it wasn't fair. In 1972, he contacted the ACLU to represent me, and other similarly situated girls, in a lawsuit against the Illinois High School Association. In our lawsuit, we argued that if there wasn't a comparable girls' high school swim team, girls should be allowed to compete for a spot on the boys' team.

We ended up losing the lawsuit for one reason: the district judge ruled that there are good reasons for keeping boys and girls separate in athletics — namely, the inherent biological differences between boys and girls. The court found it would be fundamentally unfair to girls to have to compete against boys. Even though we lost our lawsuit, it was one of several that helped pave the way for the passage of Title IX that same year. And it was under Title IX that separate women's sports teams at the high school and college levels started to be more widely established.

**F&J:** Now male athletes who identify as transgender are being allowed to compete against females. Did you ever think that women's sports could be threatened again?

**SB:** I never thought we would reverse course as dramatically as we have. When I filed my lawsuit and did not prevail, little did I ever think we'd be facing those challenges that female athletes, and only female athletes, are facing today. Girls are being discriminated against in an effort to be "politically correct." This is fundamentally wrong — and it is tragic for those girls whose dreams are cut short.

Even more unfortunate is the fact that many young female athletes are also afraid — afraid to voice their

opinion, afraid to simply stand up for their own rights, afraid to voice their belief that it's not fair to force them to compete against a boy or man.

**F&J:** Now that Pennsylvania swimmer Lia Thomas — a male identifying as female — has captured the public's attention, does this issue particularly hit home for you?

**SB:** Absolutely. In the late 70s, a huge scandal erupted involving female East German swimmers who were on performance-enhancing drugs. They consistently performed better than other female swimmers who did not have the benefit of steroids. Otherwise stellar female swimmers began to lose competitions to these athletes who had an unfair advantage.

In many ways, this is analogous to what is happening today with transgender swimmers. No matter how you suppress the testosterone levels of a biological male, he has innate advantages over your average female swimmer.



Sandra Bucha and fellow marathon swimmer John Kinsella after coming in first in a 24-hour race in 1974

**F&J:** Many people argue that women's sports aren't in danger, since only a small number of males who identify as female wish to compete against women. What would you say to that?

**SB:** If one male athlete displaces one female athlete, that is too much. It's not a question of percentages. If just one young woman's dreams are destroyed — if just one young woman's opportunities are shuttered — that, in my opinion, is one too many. **A**



Opinion

## The Biblical Case Against Critical Race Theory

By Dr. Kelvin J. Cochran

Dr. Kelvin J. Cochran

As critical race theory (CRT) infiltrates our schools and sparks debate within church communities, it's important that Christians know its true nature — and just how harmful it can be.

CRT is a worldly ideology that looks at everyone and everything through the lens of race. It teaches that people are either “oppressor” or “oppressed,” “good” or “bad,” based entirely on their race. It rejects the biblical teaching that all people, regardless of their race, are created in God's image, are fallen and in need of a Savior, and have equal access to salvation and grace through the work of Jesus.

### Theory vs. Truth

From a theological perspective, CRT elevates the influence and power of man (oppressors) over the influence, power, and sovereignty of God. Any theory or ideology that places greater hope in what men can do over what God can do is flawed.

People of faith “*look to the hills for our help. Our help comes from the Lord.*” (Psalm 121:1-2) True redemption, reconciliation, and recompense comes only from God through Christ.

CRT also asserts that certain groups are victims and do not have the ability to change their status. But my own background tells a different story.

Raised in the Deep South by a single mother, I lived with my family in a “shotgun house” propped on

cinder blocks. We survived on food stamps, slept four boys to a bed, and ate mayonnaise sandwiches. I knew that not everyone lived like that. *I didn't want to live like that.*

One Sunday afternoon when I was 5 years old, I watched a giant red truck pull up to the curb across the street, men in bulky coats jumping out to fight a blaze that had erupted at a neighbor's house. I dreamed of being a firefighter from that point on. Eventually, I would become Fire Chief of Atlanta, U.S. Fire Administrator, and now a VP at Alliance Defending Freedom.

The history of our great nation is filled with stories of redemption.

Through faith and patriotism, Abraham Lincoln ended slavery. Through faith and patriotism, descendants of African slaves like Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, and George Washington Carver

**Race has been one of the greatest  
detriments to unity in the church, and CRT  
has been weaponized to widen the gap.**

Dr. Kelvin J. Cochran

**Any theory or ideology that places greater hope in what men can do over what God can do is flawed.**

“

Dr. Kelvin J. Cochran

inspired generations of black people that our destiny is not in the hands of men, but in the hands of God.

CRT sentences the oppressed to eternal victimization. It leaves no room for grace and the transforming power of the Gospel. But America's story from God's sovereign perspective is a story of redemption.

### Overcoming the Threat of Critical Race Theory

The solution to overcoming the threat of CRT is found in the “one another” scriptures in the Bible. New Testament scriptures instruct us to love one another, be kind to one another, give preference to one another, forgive one another, encourage one another, build up one another, and pray for one another.

By contrast, CRT provokes envy, resulting in unforgiveness, condemnation, and division. There is plenty of evidence that CRT is already bringing forth this fruit — even within the church, as believers take sides on the issue.

Race has been one of the greatest detriments to unity in the church, and CRT has been weaponized to widen the gap. The body of Christ need only to rely on the truth of the Gospel to overcome the threat of the theory.

Here's the truth: *“For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”* (Galatians 3:27-28)

The body of Christ cannot remain divided, passive, and silent in this season. We cannot acquiesce to CRT and retreat to our comfort zones, embracing CRT for fear of worldly consequences for speaking truth. We must stand united.

If we truly believe the Gospel is the power of God, that Jesus secured our salvation on Calvary, and that we are all one body, we don't need a “theory” that fosters division.

Truth is more powerful than theory. Theory will not change a heart. Theory will not bring reconciliation. Theory will not foster justice. Theory will not bring unity to the body of Christ.

Only the Gospel has the power to do these things. **A**

Dr. Kelvin J. Cochran is senior vice president of Human Resources & Faith Initiatives at Alliance Defending Freedom.

## About Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory teaches that people are either “oppressor” or “oppressed,” “good” or “bad,” based on their race.

- CRT claims that America was founded on racism, that racism remains deeply embedded in our institutions, and that it cannot be eliminated unless our constitutional form of government is overthrown and replaced.
- This ideology teaches that American ideals such as equal treatment under the law, honesty, hard work, bravery, innovation, individual responsibility, and good character merely serve to enable and sustain oppression.
- When CRT-influenced curriculum is introduced in schools, children are taught not to view their classmates as potential friends and playmates, but as separate and suspicious people.
- CRT-influenced curriculum and ideology are hostile to free speech because they label anyone who challenges its tenets as “oppressors.”
- CRT tells black students that they don't have the potential to achieve success, and white students that they don't have the capacity to be just or moral because they are guilty of racial superiority from birth.

*ADF is pursuing cases to protect the constitutional rights of students, parents, and teachers facing CRT curriculum and policies.*





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