First Amendment Prevails in ‘Bible Believers’ Case

The group carried signs and wore t-shirts with messages such as “Only Jesus Christ Can Save You From Sin and Hell,” “Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. All Others are Thieves and Robbers,” and “Islam is a Religion of Blood and Murder.”

They attracted a hostile crowd, and some people started throwing debris at the Bible Believers. Police officers hovered at the edges of the crowd, but made no attempt to interfere in the situation.

The Bible Believers asked the police for protection, but the police told them that they had to leave or they would be cited for disorderly conduct.

What the police did was a clear violation of the First Amendment right of the demonstrators to speak. Even strong or disagreeable speech is protected under the Constitution, and it was the duty of the police to protect the demonstrators from the crowd.

Further, refusing to protect controversial speakers gives the crowd a “heckler’s veto” which the US Supreme Court has held to be unconstitutional. If speakers – even obnoxious and provocative speakers – can be silenced by threats from others, the First Amendment takes a hit.

As long as speech is not meant to incite a riot, it is protected.

The Bible Believers sued in federal court, but lost at the district court level. They appealed to the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals and lost again. They then asked that an en banc hearing be held before the entire Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals which is comprised of 13 justices.

At this point, the DKT Liberty Project filed a friend-of-the-Court brief which the American Civil Liberties Union joined, urging the Court to rule in favor of the Bible Believers’ right to free speech. The brief noted that the US Supreme Court has said, “In public debate, we must tolerate insulting, and even outrageous, speech in order to provide adequate ‘breathing space’ to the freedoms protected by the First Amendment.” Further, “…the police must take reasonable steps to protect speakers engaged in protected speech in a public forum and faced with a hostile audience.”

The Sixth Circuit agreed and ruled in favor of the Bible Believers, supporting a fundamental American right.
The Human Cost of Welfare is Published

This timely book by Phil Harvey and Lisa Conyers is subtitled: How the System Hurts the People It’s Supposed to Help.

The authors did interviews all over the USA to find out what welfare recipients really think and the effect these programs have on real people who are caught up in the system. They discovered that these programs are often damaging to the people they are meant to serve, keeping people poor, unhappy, and dependent on the government.

“It may be hard to believe that a book discussing welfare policy can be described as a page-turner, but here it is ... Perhaps the authors would be willing to hand out copies of this book to new and returning members of Congress as they convene in January 2017.”

- Jennifer Bort Yacovissi, Washington Independent

The book explores the connections between work and happiness, the war between welfare and work, and suggests ways to improve the welfare system and the lives of people now dependent on it. See more at humancostofwelfare.com

The Human Cost of Welfare

Available Here:

Order NOW from the publisher’s website and get 20% off. Use discount code (Q11620) at:


Click the image to watch Phil Harvey and Lisa Conyer’s Interview on Reason TV:
“Can We Take a Joke” Lights Up the Screen at World Premier in New York City

The DKT Liberty Project’s groundbreaking movie on free speech had its world premiere at the prestigious ComedyDOC Film Festival at New York’s IFC Center on November 17, 2015 which played to full houses. The film, “Can We Take a Joke,” features comedians describing the censorship they face, especially on college campuses where speech ought to be the most free, but sadly is not.

Many of today’s college students are bent on silencing jokes and opinions that might offend someone and are often more interested in being outraged than having a laugh. Comedians, including Penn Jillette, Gilbert Gottfried, Lisa Lampanelli, Jim Norton, and Adam Carolla fight back in this feature documentary, produced and directed by Ted Balaker.

In the movie, Greg Lukianoff, president and CEO of the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE) explains why colleges’ humorless conformity threatens us all. Brookings Institution scholar Jonathan Rauch reveals how outrageous insults from the Westboro Baptist Church near Topeka, Kansas actually helped the gay rights movement, and Jon Ronson, author of So You’ve Been Publicly Shamed, tells the tale of a woman whose life was destroyed when Twitter mobs misinterpreted her joke. He says we’re all one clumsy joke away from public ruin.

“A great film—funny, deft, insightful and inspiring. And it couldn’t be more timely. May it play on every college campus across the country.”

- John Tierney,
The New York Times

It was 50 years ago this year that the comedian Lenny Bruce died after being repeatedly arrested for exercising free speech in his comedy act. Today, Lenny is considered an American hero, but the free speech he fought for is increasingly under attack in the name of not offending anybody.

BREAKING NEWS:
SAMUEL GOLDWYN CO. AGREES TO DISTRIBUTE “CAN WE TAKE A JOKE”- THEATRICAL RELEASE SLATED FOR SUMMER

Samuel Goldwyn Films is planning a limited theatrical release of “Can We Take a Joke?” in late summer, followed by a wider digital release. Meantime, numerous sneak peek weeks are being held on college campuses with the aim of stirring discussion about the importance of the open exchange of ideas.

Director Ted Balaker noted that the film is being released in conjunction with the 50th anniversary of the death of Lenny Bruce. “In our age of instant outrage and kneejerk censorship, we need Lenny’s influence now more than ever,” he said.
CIVIL FOREFEITURE: THE LIBERTY PROJECT FIGHTS BACK

POLICE TAKE PREGNANT WOMAN’S CAR AND MONEY

Veronica Costa, a co-owner of Genesis Cleaning Service, was traveling south with a companion from Modesto, California to San Diego when they were “picked off” by a narcotics enforcement team. The officers who pulled her over asked to search the vehicle. When she denied them permission, they went ahead and searched it anyway and found $17,900 in cash.

The authorities were uninterested when she tried to tell them that her business was cleaning up construction job sites on behalf of major contractors. She explained that the money was to pay her employees who were mostly Hispanic.

The officers told her they were keeping the money and demanded that she sign a disclaimer of ownership, saying they would also seize her car unless she signed the disclaimer. She was 8 months pregnant, and after much agonizing, Veronica finally signed.

They then told her, “Get out of the car. We’re taking it.” Veronica said, “But I signed the paper.” They replied by saying, “We changed our mind.”

They left her and her companion standing on the highway outside a closed police substation at 1:30 in the morning.

The DKT Liberty Project stepped in to support Veronica’s case. Thanks to excellent work by her lawyer, her car and the entire $17,900 were returned.

POLICING FOR PROFIT

The law bizarrely permits police to seize property on the merest suspicion of a connection to a crime. No proof needed. They are supposed to get permission or have probable cause to search.

Under current law, you can be subject to having your money or property seized by police without ever having been charged with, or convicted of, a crime. This makes it easy and profitable for law enforcement to engage in what’s been called “policing for profit.”

The federal government has a program called “Equitable Sharing”: local law enforcement seizes the property, and the federal government then “adopts” it so that it becomes a federal forfeiture. The federal government keeps 20%, and up to 80% goes back to local law enforcement. No charges or convictions are required.

Cash or property that has been taken from US citizens over the years has now exceeded the amount taken from citizens by criminals over the same period of time (see chart above).

The Liberty Project is a member of a coalition of thirty organizations that is asking Congress to reform civil forfeiture laws. Only federal legislation can change these appalling practices.
Civil Forefeiture: The Liberty Project Fights Back

Cops Seize $40,200 on Suspicion of Drug Activity, Liberty Project Helps Get It Returned

Kenneth Knight was riding with a friend in southern California when the Highway Patrol pulled them over.

Without asking permission and without a warrant, the officers told them to get out of the car and searched it.

They found and seized $40,200 in cash without allowing Mr. Knight to explain how he obtained the money. They also found 2 grams of marijuana in the car.

As the police left, one of the highway patrolmen tossed the 2 grams of marijuana back to Mr. Knight and said, “Here – you’ve had a rough day. You’ll need it.”

The Liberty Project agreed to support the case by paying Mr. Knight’s legal fees. His attorney, with the help of a private investigator, was able to prove that the $40,200 had no connection whatsoever with drugs.

Faced with these facts, the Assistant US Attorney ultimately returned all of Mr. Knight’s money.

DEA Agents Seize $8,000 from Traveler at Dulles Airport, U.S. Attorney Settles

Linfwood Thorne, a middle-aged black man who was carrying $8,000 in his flight bag, was approached by Drug Enforcement Agency [DEA] personnel as he waited to board his plane for California. The DEA agents were excited when they found the cash and didn’t want to hear his explanation.

Thorne’s business is buying and selling used cars, largely classified as salvage, and then fixing them up and reselling them. He buys these cars all over the country, and the DEA had no basis for seizing his money. Even so, the agents took the $8,000.

The Liberty Project stepped in and paid the fees for his lawyer. After two months of paperwork and negotiations, the Assistant US Attorney agreed in a settlement to return $7,000 of the money. The $1,000 balance was basically stolen by the police, but Thorne had to be satisfied with what he got.
Supporting Scientists at the Rice Research Institute in the Philippines to Publicize Golden Rice

The DKT Liberty Project has agreed to provide financial assistance to the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) based in the Philippines. The money is earmarked to provide information and communications about Golden Rice to government officials and the public.

Over a million people, primarily women and young children, and mostly in Asia, die each year from Vitamin A Deficiency. Many children go blind, and half of them then die. These people are among the poorest of the poor and often live on a single bowl of rice a day. If that bowl were Golden Rice, these deaths would be averted because Golden Rice contains beta-carotene which provides Vitamin A to the body.

Golden Rice is controversial to some because it has been genetically engineered. Scientists at IRRI added a corn gene and a bacterium found in pineapple to the rice which results in good-quality beta carotene the body can absorb. Scientists, researchers, and governments around the world have found such genetically modified foods to be safe, and no one has ever gotten sick from eating them.

However, opposition remains. Notably, Greenpeace hoodlums broke into a Golden Rice test field at IRRI in 2013 and destroyed the rice plants in an attempt to set back the development of this life-giving food. Funding from the DKT Liberty Project will help IRRI provide scientific information about Golden Rice to officials and the public.

LUIS V. US: VICTORY FOR SIXTH AMENDMENT AT SUPREME COURT

Four years ago, Sila Luis was indicted in Florida for Medicare fraud, and federal prosecutors asked the Federal Trial Court to freeze all of Luis’s assets. This action included “untainted” assets - - money that was not connected in any way to her alleged crimes.

Luis appealed, arguing that freezing her untainted assets would prevent her from paying her lawyer to defend her. This, she said, would violate the Sixth Amendment of the Constitution which guarantees defendants the right to counsel in a criminal proceeding.

The trial court rejected her arguments and froze all her assets. The US Supreme Court took the case, and the Cato Institute filed an amicus (friend of the court) brief in support of her appeal which the Liberty Project joined.

The Supreme Court overturned the lower courts in a 5 to 3 ruling, upholding the right of all Americans to be represented by a lawyer of their choice. The Sixth Amendment’s right to counsel is a cornerstone of our constitutional rights under the law.