

Chick-fil-A's Not-So-Slow Fade Into Compromise

"There's no question we know that, as we go into new markets, we need to be clear about who we are," Chick-fil-A President and Chief Operating Officer Tim Tassopoulos said in an exclusive interview with Bisnow. "There are lots of articles and newscasts about Chick-fil-A, and we thought we needed to be clear about our message."

Tassopoulos' statement came in response to Chick-fil-A's global expansion and plans to change its current philanthropic structure and focus to three initiatives: education, homelessness and hunger. However, Chick-fil-A will no longer donate to the Salvation Army, Paul Anderson Youth Home and Fellowship of Christian Athletes (all of which successfully address one or more of these three initiatives) because they have been "characterized as anti-LGBT groups" by LGBT activists for their position that marriage is the union of one man and one woman. In fact, to be clear about its message, Chick-fil-A proudly stated it will support Covenant House International, which promotes an aggressive LGBT agenda.

Covenant House, which is much smaller than the Salvation Army (in only 31 cities), is an LGBTQ activist organization that celebrates homosexuality and "transgenderism." Tassopoulos states: "This provides more focus and more clarity." This clarity reveals the drastic change in Chick-fil-A's direction, which many have called a betrayal of the Christian community. Instead of funding Christian organizations that believe in marriage between one man and one woman, Chick-fil-A now funds organizations that advocate the opposite.

The founder of Covenant House, a Catholic priest, was sued for allegedly sexually abusing youth who were seeking shelter and food. Covenant House now considers itself to be secular.

Covenant House proudly promotes LGBT on its website, referring to “LGBTQ Inclusion Initiatives,” and even does an “inclusion assessment” at every one of its facilities. Covenant House also proudly supports the New York City Gay Pride parade with its own float, banners, T-shirts and hashtag #CovUnity. Covenant House is recognized as a national funder of LGBT causes and even supported a drag queen story hour in New York. In addition, Covenant House does not stop at LGBT activism; it also takes girls to abortion clinics in vans that prominently display the Covenant House name.

All of the U.S. and Canadian Covenant House programs partner with Cyndi Lauper’s organization, True Colors, to ensure they are fully on board with the LGBT agenda. To work there, employees must affirm “transgenderism” and homosexual practices as part of a young person’s “authentic self” and help create “a welcoming environment for LGBTQ youth by using visual cues like safe space stickers, all gender restroom signs and pronoun buttons.” Upon arrival to Covenant House, everyone must declare the pronouns by which they want to be known, thereby coercing all others to accept faux “transgender” identity through mandatory speech.

Covenant House also utilizes The Inclusion Toolkit that “walks you through the process of creating a more inclusive and affirming environment for young people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning (LGBTQ) and will also equip you with the policies and tools to back it up.”

In retrospect, Chick-fil-A’s change has been ongoing for several years. In 2012, Chairman and CEO Dan Cathy, whose family-run company was started by his father, Truett Cathy, publicly expressed during a radio interview that marriage is between a man and a woman—“the biblical definition of the family unit.” His statements stirred controversy among LGBT activists. As a result, Governor Mike Huckabee created a Chick-fil-A Appreciation Day on Aug. 1, 2012. People across

the country flocked to the restaurant that day, not primarily because of the fast-food chain's chicken sandwiches, but because of its CEO's vocal support of traditional marriage. Following Chick-fil-A's public statement setting forth Covenant House to illustrate its current direction, Huckabee now regrets he promoted Chick-fil-A.

But the change did not begin in 2019. Just two years after stating that marriage was between a man and a woman, in 2014, Dan Cathy told the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* that he regrets his statement that marriage is between a man and a woman. Cathy said, "Every leader goes through different phases of maturity, growth and development and it helps by [recognizing] the mistakes that you make. And you learn from those mistakes. If not, you're just a fool. I'm thankful that I lived through it and I learned a lot from it." This public statement expressing regret for his support of marriage between a man and a woman marks the beginning of Chick-fil-A's change that led to the 2019 exclusive interview with Tassopoulos, the president and COO.

The public statement by Tassopoulos comes after several U.S. airports rejected the company from concessions deals earlier this year. More recently, the landlord of the first Chick-fil-A in the U.K. announced eight days into its lease that it would not be continue—all because of the company's perceived anti-LGBT stance. The company is also opening its first location in Boston, where the late Mayor Thomas Menino pledged to ban the company from opening within city limits after Cathy voiced his biblical view of marriage in 2012. In San Jose, California, which recently approved a Chick-fil-A as part of its new concessions contract at its airport, officials made the pre-emptive decision to announce it would not renew the chain when its lease comes up for renewal in 2026. In the meantime, San Jose politicians have called for making their airport branch of the chain "the gayest Chick-fil-A" until its lease expires by surrounding it with the rainbow flag, a

symbol for the LGBT community. Chick-fil-A is also seeking to open its first restaurant in Hawaii.

Since Chick-fil-A plans to open 15 restaurants in Canadian markets, it hired an international lobbying firm, Navigator, that is responsible “for successfully pushing for homosexual ‘marriage’ at the same time ... other Christian conservatives [were working] to oppose it.” Navigator wants to “facilitate open dialogue and foster long-term relationships with key decision makers in areas of interest to their operations.” Clearly, this is part of Chick-fil-A’s overall efforts to blunt criticisms from LGBT activists.

So while Dan Cathy may say the company still has the same biblical values, as he stated in a conversation with Samaritan’s Purse President and CEO Franklin Graham, the company’s actions tell a different story.

After his brief phone conversation with Cathy, Graham was made aware that Chick-fil-A had made a substantial 2020 financial commitment to Covenant House International. In his interview with the Republican National Hispanic Assembly, Graham said that when he was made aware that Covenant House affirms and promotes LGBT lifestyles, he was sincerely caught off guard with this new information. Graham also agreed that those organizations that profess to embrace biblical truths should not be financing LGBT-affirming institutions.

Afterward, Graham called on Christians to pray that Chick-fil-A holds true to its historic Christian values. In an apparent departure from his previous comments, Graham wrote:

Chick-fil-A has been in the news a lot, and every day it seems there’s a new article about their charitable giving. There has been a lot of concern and criticism, and maybe rightly so. For Christian schools, businesses and organizations, there is always a danger of drifting to the left. It is my sincere hope that Chick-fil-A will not allow that to happen. With the majority of corporate America caving

to the LGBTQ agenda, Chick-fil-A has stood against the tide—with people of faith supporting them all the way. What can we do now? I would encourage Christians everywhere to pray for Dan Cathy, his brother Bubba, and the family as they have some important decisions to make. It's their company, they can do what they want. But my prayer is that God will lead and direct them, and that they will continue to honor their late father Truett Cathy's strong stand for biblical values—all to the glory of God! While Chick-fil-A is one of the few restaurants closed on Sunday to honor God, what if we make today "Pray for Chick-fil-A Day?" Will you join me in praying?

In explaining Chick-fil-A's funding decisions, VP of Corporate Social Responsibility and Executive Director of the Chick-fil-A Foundation Rodney Bullard, an Obama and Hillary Clinton supporter, said: "We don't want our intent and our work to be encumbered by someone else's politics or cultural war. If something gets in the way of our mission, that is something that we are mindful of and cognizant of." Well, Chick-fil-A is still in the culture wars. It just switched sides.

To expand its corporate footprint, Chick-fil-A has betrayed the Christian community that made the company so successful. Chick-fil-A has made a 180-degree turn to appease LGBT activists and now heavily funds LGBT, abortion and even the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC)—an organization that seeks to destroy Christian and conservative groups.

Chick-fil-A's promotion of Covenant House as an example of its current direction is shocking. In addition, tax records also reveal that Chick-fil-A has immersed itself in funding a myriad LGBT and abortion organizations. In addition, Chick-fil-A also funds the YWCA, a pro-abortion and pro-LGBT organization that repeatedly partners with Planned Parenthood. It also funds The Pace Center for Girls, yet another pro-abortion organization. The education and advocacy group featured radical pro-abortion feminist Gloria Steinem (the "I Had an Abortion" activist who declared that birthing children

is the “fundamental cause of climate change”) as the keynote speaker for their most recent girls’ summit.

Chick-fil-A also gives to Chris 180 (\$27,500 in 2017; \$25,000 in 2019), a pro-LGBT behavioral health and child welfare service agency. The organization boasts of being awarded the “Leader in Supporting and Serving LGBT Families and Youth from the Human Rights Campaign Foundation.”

Junior Achievement (JA) also receives hundreds of thousands of dollars from Chick-fil-A. In 2016, JA joined Georgia Prospers, a coalition of pro-LGBT organizations in their “Too Busy to Hate” campaign to politically oppose religious liberty legislation, specifically the First Amendment Defense Act, from passing in Georgia.

Instead of supporting Christian charities like the Salvation Army, the Fellowship of Christian Athletes and the Paul Anderson Youth Home, Chick-fil-A is now going full-speed in reverse. The Chick-fil-A Foundation donates to organizations linked to local Democrats (who actively work against Christian values and counseling) and assorted causes regarding “diversity,” “equity” and “social justice” such as groups like Atlanta’s Westside Future Fund—a project of the Atlanta Committee for Progress together with former Mayor Kasim Reed. In January 2015, Reed fired Atlanta Fire Chief Kelvin Cochran because he wrote a men’s devotional book on his personal time that briefly mentions biblical sexual morality. In June 2015, Reed praised the Supreme Court’s ruling in favor of same-sex marriage and ordered Atlanta City Hall to be lit in rainbow colors in celebration of what he called “a momentous victory for freedom, equality and love.” The Chick-fil-A Foundation also donates to the Andrew Young Foundation and the former Atlanta liberal mayor sits on its advisory board. Young is an ardent advocate of the LGBTQ agenda and same-sex marriage. He said that Kelvin Cochran doesn’t understand the Bible. The

City of Atlanta had to pay Cochran \$1.2 million for its blatant religious discrimination and wrongful termination.

Dan Cathy has partnered with Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms, who joined the Mayors Against Discrimination Coalition to expand rights and protections for the LGBT community. Bottoms has asked state leaders to enact counseling bans and thus prevent youth who are struggling with unwanted same-sex attractions, behavior and gender confusion from receiving professional counseling.

Chick-fil-A donates to Muslim refugees through Friends of Refugees and to the New Leaders Council, which identifies as a "hub of progressive Millennial thought leadership" and which exists to "support one another along their individual path to a more progressive political and cultural landscape."

A 2017 tax report shows that the Chick-fil-A Foundation contributed to the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), an organization that grossly misrepresents and recklessly labels Christian, pro-family and conservative nonviolent groups as "hate groups," including them in with violent groups like the KKK, Neo-Nazis and white supremacists. The SPLC's caustic and false rhetoric is dangerous because it creates a "Hate Map" listing so-called "hate groups." Mark Potok, with the SPLC, admitted in an interview: "Our criteria for a 'hate group,' first of all, have nothing to do with criminality, or violence, or any kind of guess we're making about 'this group could be dangerous.' It's strictly ideological." Potok is on video in a public meeting stating: "Sometimes the press will describe us as monitoring hate crimes and so on. I want to say plainly that our aim in life is to destroy these groups, to completely destroy them..."

On Aug. 15, 2012, a terrorist shooter stormed FRC's headquarters armed with a loaded semi-automatic pistol, 100 rounds of ammunition and Chick-fil-A sandwiches to "kill as many as possible and smear the Chick-Fil-A sandwiches in

victims' faces, and kill the guard." According to the FBI's interrogation, Floyd Lee Corkins admitted to the FBI that he chose FRC as a target because "Southern Poverty Law [Center] lists anti-gay groups. I found them online." Corkins was enraged by the nationwide Chick-fil-A Appreciation Day held two weeks before and used the SPLC's 'hate map' to identify FRC as his target. His heinous attack was stopped by FRC's security guard, Leo Johnson—a hero who was shot while stopping the terrorist attack. In 2012, Corkins was sentenced to prison for 25 years. Dan Cathy, nor anyone with Chick-fil-A, inquired about the well-being of Johnson or any of the FRC team members.

James Hodgkinson, who attempted mass murder in 2017 at a practice for a charity baseball game for Republican members of Congress in Washington, D.C., was a Facebook fan and follower of the SPLC. Hodgkinson gunned down Rep. Steve Scalise (R-LA), Zach Barth, a staff member for Congressman Roger Williams, former Congressional staff member Matt Mika and two U.S. Capitol police officers. The SPLC admitted Hodgkinson "liked" the group on Facebook.

The contrast between the original vision and mission of its founder, Truett Cathy, and his son, Dan Cathy, is evident in its current ditching of the Paul Anderson Youth Home. Dan Cathy is ending the legacy started by his father in 1961 by dropping corporate funding of the Paul Anderson Youth Home. Paul Anderson won a gold medal in powerlifting at the 1956 Melbourne Olympics and used his status as "the strongest man in the world" to talk about his Christian faith, often combining his testimony with feats of strength. Anderson would often speak and perform in places that housed both youth and grown men together. As a result, Anderson dreamed of a Christian youth home that would take boys out of these situations. Local leaders gave him 50 acres and in 1961 the Paul Anderson Youth Home was born. One of his first publicity stunts was to ride a bicycle from Vidalia to Omaha to raise

money for the ministry. His first stop was at a restaurant called The Dwarf House, run by Truett Cathy, which eventually became Chick-Fil-A. Truett believed in Anderson's dream and became his first supporter with a gift of \$25 and they became close friends. Truett served on his board for many years and was one of Anderson's strongest supporters. Chick-fil-A has thrown the Paul Anderson Youth Home under the bus to advance its corporate footprint, thus dishonoring the legacy of Truett Cathy.

Mat Staver, founder and chairman of Liberty Counsel, said the following:

Chick-fil-A has betrayed the Christian community that made the company what it is today. In publicly announcing that the company will no longer fund Christian groups which believe in biblical marriage and holding up LGBT and abortion activist organizations as evidence of its current direction, Chick-fil-A has caused incredible damage to Christian groups. Already we are seeing the impact of Chick-fil-A's decision on local chapters of Fellowship of Christian Athletes that are being pressured to disassociate from their biblical beliefs. Chick-fil-A's cowardice has and will continue to cause harm unless it returns to its Christian values. While presenting itself as a Christian organization, the company has been funding organizations that work to destroy them. This is the worst kind of hypocrisy. Chick-fil-A has put foxes in charge of the chicken coop and has now reached a critical crossroad. To reverse course the company must get new leadership and it must publicly reclaim its original Christian mission. But so far, Chick-fil-A remains silent. Apparently corporate greed has replaced its Christian mission. {eo}

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