

# Further Proof That ‘The New York Times’ Peddles in Fear-Mongering Propaganda

Last week, the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals issued a unanimous ruling that protected religious liberty and the rights of conscience. As the headline on the *Daily Signal* reported accurately, “Circuit Court Win for Religious Freedom on Gay Marriage.” In stark contrast, the *New York Times* headline proclaimed, “Federal Court Lifts Injunction on Mississippi Anti-Gay Law.” And it gets worse from there—much worse.

The court’s ruling allowed a Mississippi law to be enacted, a law designed to protect religious groups and individuals from being coerced by the government to act against their faith. The following protections are included in this law, as outlined by the *Signal*:

- Religious organizations, like churches, cannot be forced to use their facilities to celebrate or solemnize weddings that violate their beliefs.
- Religious convents, universities and social service organizations can continue to maintain personnel and housing policies that reflect their beliefs.
- Religious adoption agencies can continue to operate by their conviction that every child they serve deserves to be placed with a married mom and dad.
- Bakers, photographers, florists and similar wedding-specific vendors cannot be forced to use their talents to celebrate same-sex weddings if they cannot do so in good conscience.
- State employees cannot be fired for expressing their beliefs about marriage outside the office, and individual state clerks can opt out of issuing marriage

licenses so long as no valid marriage license is delayed or impeded.

- Counselors and surgeons cannot be required to participate in gender identity transitioning or sex-reassignment surgeries against their faith and convictions, while guaranteeing that no one is denied emergency care or visitation rights.
- Private businesses and schools, not bureaucrats, get to set their own bathroom, shower and locker room policies.

As Ryan Anderson pointed out in his *Signal* article, “When the government takes Americans to war, exceptions cover pacifists. When the government guarantees abortion, exceptions cover pro-lifers. These exemptions don’t amount to establishments of any religion, and neither do laws protecting dissenters after *Obergefell*.”

There is nothing exceptional here, nothing “anti-gay” or hateful, nothing that should really be controversial.

For example, federal law prevents discrimination based on religion, but that doesn’t mean that a mosque can be forced to host a Christian wedding or a synagogue forced to host a Muslim wedding. Nor does it mean that the gay owners of a T-shirt store can be forced to make t-shirts for a Christian pastor that say, “Marriage = One Man and One Woman.” Again, nothing exceptional here at all.

And note that, when it comes to medical care, no one is being denied vital care under this law. Rather, a Christian doctor (or, for that matter, Muslim or Jewish doctor) cannot be forced by the government to perform sex-change surgery if that is in violation of his or her religious beliefs. Once more, nothing controversial or hateful here. Just the protecting of our freedoms of conscience and faith. And there is compassion and common sense in the law too, so if a gay man wants his partner to have visiting rights, the law does not prevent that. The issue is one of coercion, and in scores of different

ways, all of us, on all sides of the debate, recognize that the government cannot coerce individuals or groups to violate their conscience or their faith.

But that's not how the *Times* reported things. This is the opening paragraph of the article, with my emphasis added:

"A federal appeals court on Thursday lifted an injunction on a Mississippi law that *grants private individuals and government workers far-reaching abilities to discriminate against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people on religious grounds*, though lawyers said the law was likely to remain blocked for the time being during the appeals process."

And this is how the *Times* summarized the bill, with the clear intent of instilling fear and anger: "It would allow religious organizations to engage in job and housing discrimination against LGBT people; allow public school counselors to refuse to work with LGBT students; and potentially force child-welfare agencies to place LGBT children with anti-gay foster or adoptive parents."

And the *Times* quotes Beth Orlansky, advocacy director for the liberal Mississippi Center for Justice, who said, "This law is discriminatory, and we will do everything we can to prevent it from causing any more harm."

So, to articulate the viewpoint of the *Times*, when a school is given the right to determine its own bathroom and locker room policies, that is discrimination against LGBTs. When a photographer cannot be forced to shoot a same-sex "wedding," that is discrimination against LGBTs. When a counselor declines to counsel an 8-year-old boy to wear a dress and change his name, that is discrimination against LGBTs. When a church building can determine what events it wants to host, that is discrimination against LGBTs.

What's scary in all this is that the *Times* reporters and editors probably believe this is true, as do a majority of its

readers. But do these reporters, editors, and readers believe a gay church should be forced by the government to host a pro marriage rally (meaning, male-female, as God intended)? Or do they believe a gay caterer should be forced to cater the rally? Do they believe a liberal, Presbyterian church should be forced to host a pro-life event replete with pictures of aborted babies? Do they believe a gay photographer should be forced to shoot the event? Do they believe that a gay counselor should be forced to encourage a Christian child to read the Bible?

Obviously not, across the board, and rightly so.

It would appear, then, that when the *Times* and its readers speak of equality, what they really mean is: All the rights for me, but none of them for thee. {eo}