

Is Interdenominational Theological Center Still a Christian Institution?

Dr. Jamal-Dominique Hopkins never thought he would be fired for taking a biblical stand against **homosexuality** at a Christian university. But that's what he's claiming in the wake of his termination from the Interdenominational Theological Center (ITC) in Atlanta.

The drama began when Hopkins invited Alice Brown-Collins, director for InterVarsity Christian Fellowship's Black Campus Ministries in the New England Region, to speak. Brown-Collins handed out a copy of Robert Gagnon's *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, which offers an analysis of biblical texts relating to homosexuality.

Hopkins, an expert on the Dead Sea Scrolls, says that didn't sit too well with Margaret Aymer, associate professor of New Testament studies at ITC. After Gagnon's book was distributed to his students, Hopkins says Aymer told him his job was on the line.

When the school fired Hopkins three months later, he filed a discrimination complaint against the school with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Hopkins claims ITC fired him for his orthodox evangelical beliefs and his sex.

"A few individuals have almost hijacked an institution by using the language of civil rights, the language of race and the language of social justice to further their own agenda," says Hopkins. "In the name of exclusivity, the name of equality and the name of injustice ITC has become very oppressive, exclusive and marginalized."

Founded in 1958, ITC describes itself as a consortium of

denominational seminaries whose mission is to educate Christian leaders for ministry and service in the church and the global community. The ITC says it educates and nurtures women and men who commit to and practice a liberating and transforming spirituality; academic discipline; religious, gender, and cultural diversity; and justice and peace. It's student population is largely African-American.

"Margaret Aymer's homosexual agenda appears to have become a guiding force behind ITC and anybody that disagrees with the new direction she has set for the school is in for trouble," says Joe C. Hopkins, attorney for Jamal-Dominique Hopkins, and his father. "The fallout will determine the reputation and direction and whether ITC will survive as an interdenominational theological center, which is a marketplace for ideas, or whether her idea will be the only one that survives."

The senior Hopkins says ITC's attorneys have made it very clear to him that they will not mediate the termination of his son, which he sees as a discrimination against professors who are not willing to accept the homosexual agenda at the Christian campus.

"The school is there to promote Christian education," Hopkins says. "Aymer has decided that Christian education equates to homosexual advocacy. So you have to ask: Does one do Christian ministry by evangelizing or by embracing political correctness and not offending? Is ITC really still a Christian institution?"

ITC did not return calls seeking comment.

Hopkins is still waiting on the EEOC ruling. In the meantime, he's working on a movement to reform theological teaching in a way that protects orthodox beliefs in a pluralistic society.