

Offended Atheists Cross the Line in Cultural Travesty

Last week, a humanist group filed a lawsuit in Prince George's County, Md., demanding the removal from public land of a 40-foot cross memorializing the 49 local soldiers who gave their lives in the First World War. Across the country, in Lake Elsinore, Calif., a judge ruled against a proposed monument that would have depicted a soldier kneeling before a small cross marking the grave of a fallen comrade (something soldiers actually do, by the way).

In the same town, a mother recently removed a roadside cross honoring her son—killed in an accident—after secularists raised objections even to a small roadside memorial. Watch the heartbreaking video of the mother removing the cross [here](#).

Of course, these are not the only cross cases. In fact, just last week the 2nd Circuit Court of Appeals heard oral arguments on the American Atheists' attempt to remove the famed Ground Zero cross from a museum exhibit, claiming that its inclusion in the September 11 Museum and Memorial violates the Constitution. What's next—lawsuits against religious-themed paintings in public art galleries?

All of my adult life, I've heard Christians mocked as too sensitive, how we just need to turn the channel or look away when confronted with even the most vile blasphemies. While I disagree that Christians are any more sensitive than other communities (in fact, I think we have thicker skins than most), it is correct that the response to bad speech isn't censorship but to either ignore the bad speech or answer with a better argument. I have zero desire to censor speech I don't like, even public speech I don't like. Unless a government official or action is directly violating my rights (and I don't have a right not be offended), my response to his or her

bad actions is to use my own voice to protest and my own voice to advocate that fellow citizens vote them out of office. That's constitutional democracy in action.

Unless, of course, you're an offended atheist. Then the same pop culture that mocks Christian sensibilities will treat seriously your utterly vile outrage at a mourning mother's expression of love for her fallen son. Then that means the same federal courts that have consistently held that outrage alone does not constitute a recognizable injury will grant "offended observers" special status to challenge displays of perceived religious symbols on public land. In other words, an atheist's subjective discomfort is sufficient grounds for a federal lawsuit.

This is a travesty. And it's a symbol of the reality that our culture is steadily abandoning the idea of the law as a neutral arbiter and instead fully embracing the idea that the law exists for the purpose of making sure that just the right sort of people win their cases.

And in 2014, the right sort of person is an angry atheist. Let the Christian mothers weep. Their tears are meaningless.

David French is a senior counsel at the American Center for Law and Justice. This article is crossposted on National Review.