



FIRE is a nonprofit educational foundation devoted to free speech, individual liberty, religious freedom, the rights of conscience, legal equality, due process, and academic freedom on our nation's campuses.

# Foundation for Individual Rights in Education

## THE FOUNDATION

- ▶ Home
- ▶ About FIRE
- ▶ Mission Statement
- ▶ Programs
- ▶ Issues
- ▶ Staff
- ▶ Board of Advisors

## DEFENDING LIBERTY

- ▶ Cases
- ▶ Submit a Case
- ▶ In the News
- ▶ In the Mailbox
- ▶ Events

## GET INVOLVED

- ▶ Contact Us
- ▶ Support FIRE
- ▶ Legal Network
- ▶ Internships
- ▶ Subscribe
- ▶ Jobs at FIRE

## THE BIG STORY WITH JOHN GIBSON (17:45)

January 3, 2003 Friday

Interview With Greg Lukianoff

GUESTS: Greg Lukianoff

ASMAN: Well, Christianity on campus isn't always welcome. Rutgers University in New Jersey has banned a student group and taken away its funding because the organization requires its leaders to be Christian. The school says you can't discriminate against non-Christians.

The Foundation for Individual Rights and Education, known as FIRE, the acronym, is taking up the group's cause, saying Rutgers is guilty of discrimination.

Greg Lukianoff is FIRE's director of legal and public advocacy. He joins us from Philadelphia.

Now, Greg, is this happening at other places around the country?

GREG LUKIANOFF, FOUNDATION FOR INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS IN EDUCATION: Sadly, yes. This is surprisingly common. The amount of intolerance that is actually shown towards Christian students on campuses is something that I -- I wasn't really aware of before I took this position with FIRE.

ASMAN: Now, you say, let me just stop you right there, you say "surprisingly common." But as I understand it, when these institutions are challenged for this kind of discrimination, as you call it, they very often lose.



Read excerpts from *The Shadow University* by Alan Charles Kors & Harvey A. Silverglate.



Read *Thought Reform 101* by Alan Charles Kors.



Read *Memo to Free Speech Advocates University of Wisconsin-Madison* by Harvey A. Silverglate.

Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, Inc.  
210 West Washington Square  
Suite 303  
Philadelphia, PA 19106  
Phone: (215) 717-3473 (717-FIRE)  
Fax: (215) 717-3440  
Email: [fire@thefire.org](mailto:fire@thefire.org)

FIRE is a charitable and educational, tax-exempt foundation within the meaning of Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code. [Contributions](#) to FIRE are deductible to the fullest extent provided by tax laws.

LUKIANOFF: Well, of course. They seem to not really understand the law at all. They make strange arguments to the effect that the law requires them to discriminate against religious students by saying that they can't have a religiously centered group. The law says the exact opposite. And not only that, you simply just have to pose the question to the public when these things get out, what's so dangerous about allowing a Christian group to be Christian?

ASMAN: Well, there's not only that, but there's also the question of the double standard.

Greg, can you stick with us? We got to take a short break. We want to get back to answer some of those questions right here on THE BIG STORY.

Also still ahead, a company claims to have cloned the first-ever human. So where is so-called Baby Eve? This woman might just know.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

ASMAN: Back with Greg Lukianoff, FIRE's director of legal and public policy. We're talking about whether Christians are allowed to hire Christians to head up Christian groups.

It does seem like a no-brainer. But is it really a double standard? Are there, for example, are Muslim groups prevented from staffing their own groups with pure Muslims?

LUKIANOFF: Almost certainly not. In most of these situations, the bigotry really seems to be directed towards Christian groups.

ASMAN: All right, let me, let me just ask again. I'll go through the list. Are Jewish groups prevented from putting all Jews on the heads of their boards?

LUKIANOFF: As far as the law is concerned, no. They shouldn't be. In a lot of cases they choose to not staff their groups entirely with Jews, but they certainly have the right to. That would be...

ASMAN: So what...

LUKIANOFF: ... interfering with their...

ASMAN: ... what possible...

LUKIANOFF: ... their freedom of religion.

ASMAN: ... excuse could Rutgers University use when they say Christians aren't allowed to put just Christians on their boards?

LUKIANOFF: I'm perplexed by it, but it does seem to be part of a larger trend of just sort of primitive religious intolerance on a lot of these campuses. They don't really understand that they can't rewrite the beliefs of groups they disagree with. And it's bizarre that -- and this creates, ironic situations, like the one we have, where in the name of diversity, they're trying to shut down the Intervarsity Multiethnic Christian Fellowship.

ASMAN: I love those long phrases that you hear at universities with all the double negatives there. But Greg, let me just ask. You've been in closed-door sessions with these university chiefs and so forth. What do they say?

LUKIANOFF: Oh, I haven't.

ASMAN: When you really press them, when you say, "Look, you have a double standard. You don't have this standard with Jewish groups, with Muslim groups, with, you know, conservatives trying to get on liberal groups," I mean, what do they say? How do they balance themselves out?

LUKIANOFF: Well, I haven't been in closed-door sessions with them. But my organization, the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, brings these to public attention, and an ordinary person on the street understands that it would be ridiculous to say that a Christian group can't decide to be run by Christians.

And as soon as this gets out that they're saying that it would be illegal for a Christian group to be run by Christians, they're humiliated in the court of public opinion and back down, as have happened in many cases. And as is probably is going to happen with Rutgers, they're going to be humiliated in the court, in the U.S. courts.

ASMAN: Well, that's just the point. You don't need a Supreme Court decision. It's not like affirmative action, where you have different interpretations.

LUKIANOFF: Right.

ASMAN: This is pretty clear cut. The courts -- has there ever been a case where a court has defended a university's actions such as Rutgers'?

LUKIANOFF: Not to my knowledge. And it's embarrassing how often I have to explain to these schools that they'll cite their rule on antidiscrimination and say, "We have a rule on antidiscrimination. So the Christian group cannot discriminate against non-Christians."

And I have to slowly explain to them, you can't overrule the First Amendment. It's a basic civics lesson that they seem to have missed.

ASMAN: And, and I, forgive me, Greg, you don't look terribly old. You don't -- you're certainly not old enough to be a tenured university professor. What does it make you feel like that you're having to lecture such common sense, easy-to-understand legal issues to university presidents?

LUKIANOFF: Honestly, it breaks my heart. I really think that the values of religious pluralism, they're beautiful things. And why I have to actually argue for these things at all to me is bizarre.

ASMAN: Right. Well, "bizarre" is the word we have to leave it with, because there's no other explanation. Greg Lukianoff from FIRE, Greg, thanks very much. Good luck to you.

LUKIANOFF: Thank you.

---

**Because Your Liberty is a Precious Thing**

---