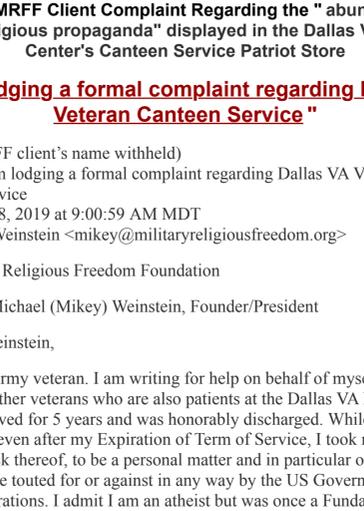




MILITARY RELIGIOUS FREEDOM FOUNDATION

MRFF DEMANDS THAT DALLAS VA MEDICAL CENTER STOP EXCLUSIVELY PROMOTING CHRISTIANITY



Original MRFF Client Complaint Regarding the "abundance" of "overt religious propaganda" displayed in the Dallas VA Medical Center's Canteen Service Patriot Store

I am lodging a formal complaint regarding Dallas VA Veteran Canteen Service

From: (MRFF client's name withheld)
Subject: I am lodging a formal complaint regarding Dallas VA Veteran Canteen Service
Date: July 18, 2019 at 9:00:59 AM MDT
To: Mikey Weinstein <mikey@militaryreligiousfreedom.org>
To: Military Religious Freedom Foundation
Attention: Michael (Mikey) Weinstein, Founder/President
Dear Mr. Weinstein,

I am a US Army veteran. I am writing for help on behalf of myself and a number of other veterans who are also patients at the Dallas VA Medical Center. I served for 5 years and was honorably discharged. While I was in service and even after my Expiration of Term of Service, I took religious belief, or lack thereof, to be a personal matter and in particular one that should not be touted for or against in any way by the US Government or their affiliate operations. I admit I am an atheist but was once a Fundamentalist Christian and was also a minister for 5 years of my 23 years in the Christian Faith and even took Christian Theology and Apologetics Courses from Liberty University. I don't hate religious people and I don't always favor atheists just for being atheists. I accept people based on their character (if they are in control of it) and their behavior toward others. I am setting this as my point of concern as I, and the other veterans on behalf of whom I am writing, find it less than patriotic for the Veterans' Canteen Service Patriot Store, housed within the Dallas VA Medical Center, to display such overt religious propaganda and in such abundance. One picture displayed the words "One Nation under God...since 1776"...along with a verse from the Bible underneath it. Any unbiased and independent research into this claim of America being a Christian Nation (based upon the Bible) is patently not true. America is a Secular Nation ensuring freedom of religion and freedom from religion and that it's based not upon the Abrahamic faith(s) but upon Greco-Roman concepts of Democracy and especially upon the principles extolled by the bright and independent thinking of those that spurned the Age of Enlightenment.

If America were based on the Christian religion, then I intuit that it would not allow much religious freedom at all as it would be violating the First Amendment to allow others to believe differently than them (whatever sect gained power over the other sects) and the Mosaic First Commandment goes against the principle of freedom of conscience. Nobody is commanded to believe to be an American and any language that says so is untrue as one can be a believer or non-believer and still be an American and religion or none alone makes a person a patriot. It is obvious that our Founding Fathers wrote the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution, and the Bill of Rights leaving out Christian religious language. No amount of Right-Wing Religious Propaganda Revisionist History will be able to erase these facts unless they do so by great force and it does concern me that the U.S. government is being operated by many with this type of sectarian persuasion and often they are loud and proud about it and are tolerated by some of their constituents. This runs counter to the writings of Founding Fathers such as Thomas Jefferson, the primary author of the U.S. Constitution, who wrote the following in correspondence with the Danbury Baptist Association, "Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between Man & his God, that he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship, that the legitimate powers of government reach actions only, & not opinions, I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should "make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof," thus building a wall of separation between Church & State. Adhering to this expression of the supreme will of the nation in behalf of the rights of conscience, I shall see with sincere satisfaction the progress of those sentiments which tend to restore to man all his natural rights, convinced he has no natural right in opposition to his social duties." (Jefferson, 1802)

John Adam's confirms America's secular foundation in The Treaty of Tripoli stating that America is not based upon the Christian religion (Adams, 1796). I am concerned about this hard turn to Right Wing Christian Nationalism and it does not represent in any way the inclusive melting pot of American society. Getting back to how this disturbed me to see such an overt favoritism of a specific religious worldview by the Veterans Administration shocked me. I wanted to say something but thought it a waste of time and would I didn't want to make a scene and be of no benefit. But I can't shake this frustration. If Freethinker, Muslim, Jewish, Native American, Sikh, Buddhist, Satanist, Hindu wanted to have their material as well displayed it would be met with anger by the majority of Veterans, and with good reason(delete). The fact that this is tolerated is something I find disturbing. America isn't a monolithic society, we are after all a nation of diversity. The original motto E Pluribus Unum (which was removed from our money in response to the Red Scare) better represents America as it means "Out of many, one" than does "In God We Trust" which excludes those of a non-religious persuasion. The US Military Armed Forces comes from this diversity and should express tolerance but also a great deal of class and protocol should be expected from those within it and the VA Hospital System. If they promote Christian memorabilia then all the other religions should also be given fair and equal representation. However, I think it is clear what is going on here. Ever since the "Wedge Document" and the new "Project Blitz" campaign many radical Right Wingers want more and more to divide the American people into an acceptable vs unacceptable class and create as close to a theocratic state as possible. This should not stand to be tolerated.

If they want to promote Patriotism that is one thing but why can't they do so by honoring the heroes from the War of Independence as well as other military events and place emphasis upon great price these brave men and women (irrespective of their religious or non-religious persuasion) paid to defend the Constitution? Why intermingling religion into patriotism or suggest that without some theistic belief that the meaningfulness of one's military service is the essentially second rate? There are and were many religious and non-religious (There are such thing as atheists in foxholes as I myself was one) serving in the Armed Forces. I am thankful to all veterans that honorably served and find it unnecessary, and exclusionary toward non-Christians, unbelievers, etc. to show favoritism toward any one group. They have all done a great service to this nation.

I sent an email to you last night regarding this complaint. Then this morning I made phone call to the Veteran Canteen Service (VCS) Central Office (1-314-845-1207) a phone call to Executive Assistance to Mr. Joseph Tober, MA Executive Director and she identified herself as Lola (who says she served in the Navy). We had a pleasant conversation and she sounded empathetic to my plea to control the stores to be more inclusive. She said she would pass on my complaints and concerns to Mr. Tober. Mr Tober's office snail mail is:

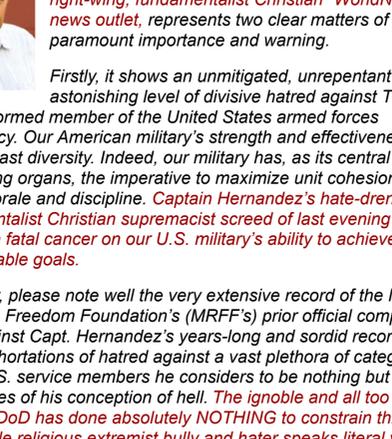
Veterans Canteen Service (VCS)
ATTN: VCS Director's Office
#1 Jefferson Barracks Road, Building #25
St. Louis, MO 63125-4194
Official email: vcs.canteen@med.va.gov

Shortly thereafter I fell back to sleep and was awakened by a call at 3:01 pm by Will Williams (VCS Director, Dallas VA Medical Center). His phone number is 214-742-XXXX. We spoke about my complaint and concerns and he asked if I noticed if the vendor was a male or female. I told him I thought it was a male vendor. He said (paraphrasing) "Oh, I see. I think I know who you're speaking about... then went on to say that it was against VCS policy to sell or promote religious items or memorabilia and that he would make sure it wouldn't happen again. I thanked him and later I spoke to you about this and you said it is common that they use the "Casablanca" method of noticing, acting shocked ("shocked I tell you"), and then going about their way. I understood that you have little confidence that a political/governmental system so flooded by Christian Fundamentalists and their power and money will change over a tiny complaint from a "nobody" such as myself, as well as the other veterans I am writing on behalf of. I see why this can be frustrating. I, and the veterans for whom I am also writing, hope you and the MRFF staff, as well as MRFF's legal experts, may be able to see to it that Constitutionally respectful and inclusive guidelines are followed and that breaking such guidelines will be immediately terminated from employment within the Veterans Administration.

Sincerely,
(MRFF client's name withheld)

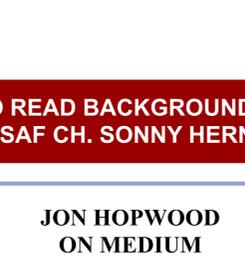
Click to Read In Inbox

MRFF Legal Counsel's Letter Demanding that the Dallas VA Medical Center's Patriot Store Stop Exclusively Promoting Christianity



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BIGOTED CHRISTIAN SUPREMACIST AIR FORCE OFFICER AND CHAPLAIN CAPTAIN SONNY HERNANDEZ RESPONDS TO REBUTTAL OF HIS PREVIOUS ARTICLE WITH A NEW ARTICLE ON WORLDNETDAILY



USAF Chaplain/Captain Sonny Hernandez

Educating 'God-Haters' on Military Chaplaincy

By: Sonny Hernandez
Sunday, July 21, 2019

(Excerpts from World Net Daily/Emphasis added by MRFF)

In less than 24 hours after posting an article entitled, "Why Military Chaplains Omit the Name of Christ," a Patheos editor, Hemant Mehta, published a hit piece, "Air Force Capt.: Military Chaplains Who Don't Proselytize Aren't True Christians."

To further his argument, Mr. Mehta appealed to the anti-God advocate, Mikey Weinstein, who "demonized Christians for cold hard, cash." Weinstein accuses me of being a "hate-drenched, fundamentalist Christian supremacist" while simultaneously publishing his own hate-drenched press release which refers to me as a "despicable religious extremist bully and hater."
With all due respect to Mr. Mehta, his reference to Weinstein's diatribe that the "DoD has done absolutely NOTHING [sic]" should have informed him why I have not been disciplined: Weinstein's psycho-babbling is frivolous, and because I have done nothing wrong. The Constitution protects my right to exercise my faith. In all of the years I have been writing about my sincerely held beliefs, I have never been sanctioned for exercising my faith. Weinstein is a (failed) lawyer and Mehta should be wiser than to reference him in the future. (Weinstein loves the publicity and puts it up on his website to bloatiate.)
In closing, I do not hate Mr. Mehta or Mr. Weinstein. If it was not for the grace of God, I would be just as intent as they are in attempting to sanction Christians from practicing their faith. I pray that God would deliver them both from their bondage to see that the God they hate, is the same God they will give an account to on the Day of Judgment. May God have mercy on them both.

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Click to read Sonny Hernandez's original article on WorldNetDaily and Hemant Mehta's rebuttal of that article on Patheos

MRFF Founder and President Mikey Weinstein's Staff Member Condemning Sonny Hernandez's Fundamentalist Christian Extremism and Bigotry Friday, July 19, 2019



"The latest public caption posting, just last evening by USAF Chaplain/Captain Sonny Hernandez on the far, right-wing, fundamentalist Christian "WorldNetDaily" news outlet, represents two clear matters of absolutely paramount importance and warning.

Firstly, it shows an unmitigated, unrepentant and astonishing level of divisive hatred against The Other by a uniformed member of the United States armed forces Chaplaincy. Our American military's strength and effectiveness derive from its vast diversity. Indeed, our military has, as its central functioning organs, the imperative to maximize unit cohesion, good order, morale and discipline. Captain Hernandez's hate-drenched, fundamentalist Christian supremacist screed of last evening is nothing short of a fatal cancer on our U.S. military's ability to achieve these irreplaceable goals.

Secondly, please note well the very extensive record of the Military Religious Freedom Foundation's (MRFF's) prior official complaints to DoD against Capt. Hernandez's years-long and sordid record of very public exhortations of hatred against a vast plethora of categories of fellow U.S. service members he considers to be nothing but future fuel for the fires of his conception of hell. The ignoble and all too telling fact that DoD has done absolutely NOTHING to constrain this despicable religious extremist bully and hater speaks literal volumes as to how deeply fundamentalist Christianity (also known as Christian Dominionism) has become inextricably intertwined into the very fabric of our United States armed forces.

DoD's comprehensive and deliberate failure to stand up to Capt. Sonny Hernandez, and his torrent of hatred of fellow service members who do not share his weaponized version of Christianity, represents a clear and present national security threat to this nation and it must be stopped in its tracks now.

MRFF is calling upon DoD and the USAF to move expeditiously to aggressively investigate and publicly punish this bigoted United States Air Force Officer and Chaplain immediately.

To this end, MRFF is officially filing a comprehensive and detailed complaint, yet again, against U.S. Air Force Officer and Chaplain Sonny Hernandez with the highest levels of the United States Department of Defense.

Stay Tuned."

CLICK TO READ BACKGROUND ON MRFF AND USAF CH. SONNY HERNANDEZ

JON HOPWOOD ON MEDIUM

Religious Advocacy Group Behind V.A. Bible in a Box Scandal Has Ties to Trump

By: Jon Hopwood
Monday July 22, 2019

(Excerpts from Medium/Emphasis added by MRFF)

The religious liberty advocacy group that backed up the false story of Manchester, New Hampshire's V.A. Bible in a Box has strong ties to President Donald Trump. It may also be actively collaborating with Department of Veterans Affairs Robert Wilkie to promote a religious agenda that boosts Trump's standing amongst Evangelical Christians and veterans.

Northeast POW Network Bob Jones told Manchester Veterans Medical Center officials and the public the false story that the large altar-sized book that morphed into the V.A. Bible in a Box was carried by Streitberger during his internment and escape from a German POW camp in Hungary. That story was used by the Department of Veterans Affairs to justify putting the Bible back on the Missing Man table after Manchester VAMC staff removed it when informed of complaints by outraged veterans by the Military Religious Freedom Foundation.

Such displays at veterans facilities were rare before a lawsuit seeking the removal of the Bible in the Box was filed by the Military Religious Freedom Foundation on behalf of one of 14 Manchester VAMC users who objected to what they saw as the government establishment of Christianity as the official religion of the V.A. Complaints across religious displays generally were taken down soon after objections were made.

After the Military Religious Freedom Foundation sued to have the Bible removed, the religious right counterattacked. Fox News in its coverage called the MRFF an "atheist organization" in its original coverage, which was false. MRFF President Mikey Weinstein claimed that Fox News contacted him via an email sent at 2am in the morning before a Liberty spokesman went on the program to chastise the lawsuit.

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CLICK TO READ BACKGROUND ON MANCHESTER VA BIBLE ISSUE, PROTEST FLYOVER, AND FILING OF FEDERAL LAWSUIT

CLICK TO READ BACKGROUND ON PAST MRFF VICTORIES: BIBLE REMOVALS FROM POW/MIA TABLES AT VA FACILITIES/MILITARY INSTALLATIONS



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MRFF Information/Contact: (505) 250-7727

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