

A Selection of Mail Received By The  
Military Religious Freedom  
Foundation:

Accolades, Acclaim, and  
Recognition Mail

In this document are messages from supporters of the Military Religious Freedom Foundation. Some messages, found in the Testimonials section, are letters of thanks from clients who have been directly helped by the foundation. The help needed ranges from removing a religious poster to ensuring a disabled veteran receive the medical care to which he is entitled. Each correspondent attests to the impact of the foundation's work in erasing both subtle and overt forms of religious coercion.

Other messages are statements of support from allied organizations. These are found in the Partnerships section. The Interfaith Alliance of Colorado, Veterans for Common Sense, and even the Department of Justice have weighed in with their support for the Military Religious Freedom Foundation. For those who believe that the foundation is anti-Christian, there is even an official statement from the California Council of Churches IMPACT, which represents 4,000 Christian congregations and 21 denominations.

Among the many simple messages of support that we receive, a few have been included in the Support section. These include the touching and the unexpected. Some are from veterans who have experienced persecution and others are from clergymen who support separation of church and state.

The last section includes many letters reporting incidents of religious persecution or aggressive proselytizing in a military workplace. The correspondents come from a variety of backgrounds. There is even one from a dedicated Christian whose coworkers continue to aggressively push him towards their particular brand of Christianity, all in the workplace. These messages, like all the letters found in the this document, attest to the continued need for the Military Religious Freedom Foundation to protect the rights of our brave military men and women.

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# Testimonials

Thousands of service members, including myself, have no other place to turn in the face of religious persecution; Mikey and the Military Religious Freedom Foundation provide an invaluable service to those who serve. Our fighting men and women are currently subjected to blatant violations of their religious freedom. Who else in this great country deserves our freedoms more than those who willingly risk their limbs and lives for it?

If the MRFF did not exist, I would have had no other means of resistance. While I was serving, Mikey Weinstein and his organization tirelessly kept me safe from harm and retribution. Time after time, MRFF and staff came through when those I was speaking out against attempted retaliation. Those who wished to silence me or make my life unbearable- Mikey silenced them, and ensured that their actions came to light.

To any currently serving member of our wonderful military: You have nothing to be afraid of by speaking out against these unconstitutional practices of military- endorsed religion. You may be given rotten looks, or you may receive numerous death threats. You may be denied promotion, or put on the most rotten (or humiliating) of details. All of these things have happened to me, plus more. However, I would do it all over again because I know that the MRFF would have my back all the way. I know that we did the right thing by standing up for our rights instead of easily rolling on our backsides.

Lastly, I would like to send my utmost gratitude to all who have contributed to the MRFF's funding. You have saved my dignity, my freedoms and possibly my life.

Thank you.



Dear Reader,

If you want something done right, sometimes you just have to do it yourself. For Mikey Weinstein, that “something” is safeguarding the Constitutional religious freedom of America’s soldiers, sailors, marines, and airmen when the government programs intended to do so fail. I am one of hundreds of thousands of service members who frequently have our Constitutional right to be free from government establishment of religion violated by mandatory participation in religious rituals. Others face employment discrimination (try being a chaplain if you don’t belong to an state-approved religious group – a job requirement in explicit violation of our Constitution’s No Religious Test Clause), difficulty getting promoted, religious insults from peers and superiors, and even physical assaults. The vast majority of complaints come from Christians who feel they work in a hostile environment because they aren’t “Christian enough” for their commanders. Using the official reporting systems (Equal Opportunity, Inspector General, the chaplains, etc.) frequently results in reprisals, breaches of confidentiality, and suppressing the complaint. The Military Religious Freedom Foundation was founded by Mikey Weinstein to fill this void for religious minorities who have no reliable institutional protections for their religious liberty.

Following our deployment to Iraq, where I was awarded the Combat Medical Badge and Purple Heart for multiple concussions from nine IED blasts, I was frequently required by my commander to attend unit religious activities. I attempted to resolve the problems by speaking with him directly, speaking with our Equal Opportunity representative, and explaining how this violated my conscience to our unit chaplain. None of this stopped them from sending me, almost monthly, to obediently participate in state-orchestrated rituals. Desperate to stop these command-enforced religious practices, this unconstitutional establishment of religion, I contacted the Military Religious Freedom Foundation in 2007.

Asking nothing in return, Mikey Weinstein and a team of brilliant lawyers dedicated their time, effort, and funding to fighting these Constitutional abuses our military overlooks. They helped me when nothing else worked. Mikey has given himself 100% to fighting this

much-needed political battle on behalf of those who fight our military battles abroad. But Mikey needs your help to continue advocating for the religious liberty of our troops. Please consider showing your support with a contribution to the Military Religious Freedom Foundation.

Respectfully,

Dustin Chalker



Mikey and everyone at MRFF,

I can't thank you enough for your quick response to the concern I raised with you. I was promoted this morning to O-3, but yesterday I was deeply apprehensive about taking my oath of office, which includes at the end the clause, "So help me God." As an atheist, it would go completely against my conscience to say those words (and for those that are religious, I think everyone is capable of keeping their word without having to promise it to their deity). I had done some research on the internet for a few days, reading everything from U.S. Code to Wikipedia. Everything seemed to indicate that I could make an affirmation instead of an oath, allowing me to leave out the words "so help me God."

However, I was fearful that my somewhat Christian command would not take my request for an affirmation at face value. Late in the day, I hoped an email regarding my options would reach you before the promotion ceremony this morning. Not only did it reach you, but you and your staff replied in a manner that can only be described as lightning quick.

You had just gotten out of a taping with CNN, and no sooner than that was over, you called me personally and told me in no uncertain terms that I did not have to say those words. Even more, you told me that if anyone gave me guff, to just call you up so you could "educate" them! Needless to say, I was incredibly relieved when I hung up the phone. As it turned out, not much drama ensued the following day, and the ceremony went off without a hitch. But without the firm footing you put me on last night, I doubt it

would have gone anywhere near as smoothly. What you and your staff do to take on the big issues like Jesus rifles and Islamophobes being invited to speak at the Pentagon is invaluable. And yet, it is wonderful to know that you not only take on the big issues, but pay attention to the little issues affecting the lives of your members, and handle them with the utmost care and urgency. Like I said, I can't say enough good things about you and your organization! It was a pleasure to speak with you on the phone and I look forward to seeing MRFF in the news even more.

Respectfully,

(name withheld), LT, USCG



Dear Mr. Weinstein,

This week presented one of the most frustrating days of my military career. The occasion to disagree with an order from someone in my chain of command is not an altogether rare occurrence but this is the first time that an order literally turned my stomach. Being ordered to bow my head during the invocation, at a ceremony I was required to attend, was something that I could not do in good conscience. It called to mind silent film I had been shown in college of the compound over which Jim Jones presided. It felt like something required of people in a cult and I felt so sick that I couldn't see straight.

Please understand that I, in no way, want people to stop praying or bowing their head when they do so if it is part of what they believe. I was raised in a Southern Baptist home and, although I no longer think of the Bible as a historical, literal account of events, going to church and learning the Bible plays a huge part of who I am. My parents still believe in the Bible that way and attend church and I support them 100 percent.

Ordering someone to fake an action of belief seems so contrary to the values with which I grew up. Come to find out, I wasn't the only one in my unit that had such a strong reaction against that order. I heard of a petition going around in an attempt to change the mind of whomever in our chain of command gave the order but I wasn't sure if that was an acceptable course of action in terms of the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ). I did know one thing for sure; that contacting you and the Military Religious Freedom Foundation would bring no retribution my way.

I was very anxious about calling your office. I felt like I was opening Pandora's Box and that made me doubt myself. I thought that maybe I was making a mountain out of a mole hill and that I should just do what I'm told because it wouldn't hurt me physically. Still, I knew that it wasn't right to be given such an order and I thought about all of my shipmates and knew that I had to follow what my heart was telling me. When I called, Ms. Bekki Miller, your personal assistant, she was very helpful and made me feel like my concerns would be swiftly addressed by you and MRFF and that all I needed to do was send an email. I still wondered if my voice would get lost in a ocean of business traffic. I knew there had to be people out there suffering worse persecution than me and I wondered if I would even be a blip on the radar. Thank you so much for responding to my email so quickly and with such aggressive determination and immediate positive effect.

Thankfully, the next day I didn't have to disobey that order because somehow and in some way, incredibly, you and MRFF had already gone to work! The command had all of a sudden "become aware" of how uncomfortable many of the Sailors in my unit were as a result of being told to bow their heads at the word of the Chaplain. After the ceremony we mustered and were informed that we would never again be ordered to visually support a religious idea despite our individual beliefs. My command made it clear that no retribution would come to anyone who spoke up about an inappropriate order of that nature. I believe that some members of my chain of command might not have even considered what anxiety their actions would create when they gave the order but they definitely know now.



I know for a fact that the ground work that you and MRFF did on our behalf, Mr. Weinstein, resulted in a sea change that will continue to ripple in the coming weeks and years. I have a notion that the type of events which our command supports is going to be looked at more closely in the future and that we may not be forced to take part in some of the ideological services which we have been required to support in the past. It feels like my command and those like mine which are scattered throughout the United States and overseas are waking up to a reality of which they hadn't been aware. The diversity that we value so much in terms of race and culture is spreading to an appreciation of the the diversity of beliefs that exists in all commands.

I know that, thanks to you, Mr. Weinstein and MRFF, nobody in my unit will be humiliated in the way I and many of my fellow sailors/shipmates felt humiliated. I know for an absolute FACT that change for the better is happening right now totally because of your work at The Military Religious Freedom Foundation. I know that your work is not against religion and that means the world to me because I think that people should believe what ever it is that gives their life meaning and gives them peace of mind. As a unit, our movements during a ceremony are practiced and precise. The act of bowing our heads was to be another of those movements. I do realize the power of uniform movements in a military ceremony but I also realize the power of having this one part be individual. When people see only some heads go down, they will realize the diversity of they Navy. They will know that anyone can serve with pride whatever their beliefs as long as their beliefs are in harmony with the UCMJ. They will know that even someone who only believes in Ships and Shipmates is welcome to serve with honor, courage and commitment. THANK YOU MIKEY AND MRFF!

Very Respectfully,

A Grateful Sailor, on Behalf of Many Other Grateful Sailors Who Wish To Remain  
Anonymous



Dear Mikey,

Thank you for getting back to me so soon. There needs to be more groups and people like you in this world. What your group does is awesome. I don't know where I else I could have turned. My son was in college at (withheld). He was in his second year and feeling lost with no direction, so he decided to join the Army. I supported him 110%. I told him this would be good for him and that the Army would give him a lot. What I didn't know was that it would give him the feeling of living in Germany during the 30's as a Jew. What a fool and bad father I am!!!

My ex-wife received a disturbing letter from our son about anti-Semitism from his drill sergeant and how his whole platoon was following suit. He was being belittled daily as a FUCKIN JEW and a KEIK. I contacted (withheld)'s office and stirred the pot. My ex-wife then got a call from our son from the exec. General's office and also talked to him. He told her that they had taken his statement and were conducting a full investigation. Come to find out they put him back into the same platoon. Talk about feeding the lamb to the wolves. I then got a phone call from his Co. to tell me that my son is OK and out of the hospital. Apparently Wed. night he got his clocked cleaned and beat to the point that he was sent to hospital by ambulance with a concussion. He was in bad enough shape that they did a head and neck CT scan. I have since found out that he has an appointment with a dentist for a possible broken jaw!!

They have mentally broken him to the point that he is willing to ruin his life by getting a dishonorable discharge to get out of this hell. They have now moved him to the (withheld) platoon in the same Co., so everyone knows what happened and why he is there. What have they accomplished? NOTHING!! I feel like this written from the movie "A Few Good Men" and we all know the outcome there. That is what terrifies me. I DO NOT WANT TO BURY MY ONLY SON. Ever heard of friendly fire? I thought this was America and this is the type of thing our military was supposed to protect us from. In the military bigotry should not exist. How can someone that hates Jews protect us from

terrorists that have the same feelings? If this is what this country is all about now I probably need to leave before I fall to the same demise as my relatives during WWII.

I found your group on the internet Thursday night and read about your group. You are my last hope. I do not know whom else to turn to. I am not rich nor powerful, just your average American, so my voice means nothing to the powers to be. I called the White House and they had me fax a letter to the President, but that means nothing along with the e-mail I sent to the VP:

*Dear Vice President Cheney,*

*My ex-wife got a letter from our son whom is in basic training at (withheld). In the letter he describes how his drill sergeant is blatantly anti-Semitic and belittles him about his religion in front of the whole platoon to the point that my son has no friends and is constantly looking over his shoulder. His battle buddy even heard some of the guys saying they needed to beat the shit out of him his sleep for the DS since he is a JEW. This is disgusting to me. I contacted (withheld)'s office about it and they said they would inquire. The gentleman also agreed with me calling the White House about this and I did. They gave me a fax number to fax a letter along with a copy of his letter and I did. Then I called back to inquire when I may hear back from someone and was told maybe 9-10 weeks. He will be done by then. How can our Army have someone of authority and in the position of molding our young soldiers be teaching this. This makes me disgraced that my son joined our armed forces, when I was the proudest parent when he enlisted. I know I will not get a response, as I am just your average peon and mean nothing to the POWERS TO BE, but at least I know in my heart that I have done all I can for my son. This is a sad state of affairs, especially with everything going on in the world when we need our young people to step up. I am the one that told my son that this was a good thing and that the Army would be good for him. I now feel like I am the father that fed his son to the wolves. What an ass I am. I thought that this was the type of*

*thing our armed forces protected us from? I guess I was wrong. If this is the type of things our military is teaching why did we save the Jews during WWII and why is Israel our ally?*

*Respectfully,*

*(name withheld)*

During these trying times and having an entirely volunteer Army we need every young man and woman we can get. My son was so excited and proud to enlist. He was even starting to run and get into shape, so when he got to basic he would be ready to do what he had to. We talked about it daily and he was so glad to finally have a direction that he felt good about. When we talked, we talked a lot about basic and he knew it would be hard and he was prepared for the physical and mental breakdowns, but not over his religion. THEY HAVE RUINED MY SON MENTALLY and it is my fault for telling him this was good. Now I am asking for your help. You are my last hope. Please help me save my son's life that I have helped ruin. From what I have read if anyone can help me it would be you. The last contact info I have for him is: (information withheld)

While writing this, my wife just called me and read me a letter she just got from him. In the letter he tells of the beating. This is his story. He was getting ready to take a shower and someone called him into the laundry room. They told him some of his stuff was in their pile of cloths, so he bent down to look. When he went to stand up and saying he did not see any all he saw was a fist coming at him. It knocked him back and all he could do was protect his face and head as he was being punched in the head, jaw and temple. He was knocked out and woke to 2 privates saying his name a few minutes later. He was then taken by ambulance to the hospital. It was a totally planned ambush and beating. PLEASE HELP!!! Thank you in advance for any help from a desperate father for an even more desperate son.

Jonathan Handman



Dear Mr. Weinstein,

I am writing today to inform you of the wonderful news that my son, Michael, has been officially discharged from the United States Army. Further, he has just received a fully honorable medical discharge.

Although I am very joyous.....bitter sweet emotions still come to mind. I will NEVER be able to thank you and the Military Religious Freedom Foundation (MRFF) enough for the relentless humanitarian help we have received! I am convinced that my son would still be in a terrible military purgatory had we not been so fortunate to find you and The Military Religious Freedom Foundation. MRFF's tireless 24/7 persistence finally led directly to this just outcome. No other organization even so much as gave us the time of day despite our best efforts to reach out for help in our time of desperate need.

Through our being a client of the Military Religious Freedom Foundation, we were astounded to discover that we were not alone; rather, we learned of the many others, indeed thousands, who also face a similar struggle against religious persecution and bigotry in the United States armed forces. The nonstop attempts of the religious majority to intimidate, bully and coerce those of different faiths is unbelievably systemic and tragically widespread throughout the American military. We were so very troubled to discover that these terrible situations are experienced not only by Jewish families, like ours, but also by those military members ranging in beliefs from Christian (both Protestant and Catholic) to Islamic, Buddhist, Hindu, Wiccan, etc and also those with no religious belief.

I am so completely and profoundly proud of Michael for standing up for his religious freedom, however I am so disappointed in our United States Army for allowing ANY soldiers' religious rights to be challenged and made sport of. All of our brave servicemen & women made a courageous choice to join the proud ranks of our nation's honored military and to protect and defend our Constitution when they signed their names & took an oath. That oath requires each service member to protect and defend the Constitution from all enemies, foreign and DOMESTIC. We Americans all sleep under the same

precious blanket of freedom that our brave military provides for us....knowing that while we securely sleep many soldiers of all religions may and will die.

Mr. Weinstein, what you and MRFF have done for my family & the countless other soldiers and their loved ones is indeed a blessing. We are so grateful, so very appreciative that a bold and action-oriented Foundation such as yours exists. We realize now more than ever how imperative it is to spread the word swiftly about supporting MRFF's vital Constitutional cause. You will certainly have our total support forever and a day.

Sir, you will always have my greatest respect...

Randi Handman

Mother of Pvt. Michael C. Handman



Dear MRFF:

I just wanted to reach out to Military Religious Freedom Foundation and say thank you so very much. MRFF has done everything possible under the sun to help me out every step of the way! MRFF obviously is well respected and in some cases even feared by the United States Army. Believe me, I have seen it first hand! As soon as MRFF gets involved the total attitude and climate changes within the chain of command. I can not even begin to say thank you to MRFF, they have been absolutely remarkable in every aspect, you guys have taken my situation to a place I never dreamed of. THANK YOU!

Sincerely,

SPC Zachari Klawonn.



Dear Mikey,

It's almost hard to believe that it's been three years already since I moved back to Iowa City – the city where I was born. Although throughout the years I had been back here to visit many times, it had been nearly forty years since I'd lived here. During those years it was easy for me to dismiss my childhood experiences of religious intolerance here in Iowa as anachronistic. However it didn't take long after I moved back to discover that bigotry and intolerance are still, unfortunately, a way of life for some Iowans.

As you know, I am a 100% "service connected" disabled U.S. Navy veteran. Three years ago when I moved back to Iowa City and began to access services through the Iowa City V.A. Medical Center, I was surprised to experience blatant discrimination from the beginning. Despite being a religious Jew (and the V.A. knew this – it was and is in my medical records) the Iowa City V.A. demanded that I attend orientation class in the Christian chapel –decorated with a prominent crucifix and the Stations of the Cross (a clear violation of long-standing Department of Veterans Affairs rules and Federal Law). When I objected, they demanded I attend anyway, and after I refused the instructor threw my orientation papers at me and I was denied any further orientation.

During two hospitalizations, despite my written and verbal instructions to the contrary, the hospital staff was not content to just refuse to contact my rabbi, they sent a proselytizing Protestant chaplain in to see me – while I was bedridden and wired to a heart monitor – to tell me that Jesus was the Messiah of the Jews too and that my only hope was salvation through Jesus Christ. During three hospitalizations I was denied kosher food and spent my time in the hospital not eating. Later, when my rabbi accompanied me to a meeting to lodge a formal complaint with the patient advocate and a representative of the chaplains' office, I was told it was all my fault because apparently I had failed to protest vigorously enough, although it's unclear how I could have jumped up and down and screamed when I was suffering chest pains, wired to a heart monitor and being sedated. Still, it gets worse.

The day after my rabbi and I met with representatives from the Iowa City V.A. Medical Center, the V.A. struck back. At the time I was suffering through one of my frequent bouts of kidney stones, and the day after our meeting my primary care physician informed me that they would be discontinuing my care – they weren't going to either remove my seven (yes, SEVEN!) kidney stones or continue to provide me with pain medication. They cut off my pain meds! I was shocked and asked the doctor why; his response was simple – he rolled his chair over next to mine, put his hand on my leg, looked me in the eye and said, "You're a religious Jew. Why don't you try prayer or meditation?"

During the unbelievably painful weeks that followed I contacted the Military Religious Freedom Foundation and you immediately sprung into action. You flew out to Iowa and together we had a press conference in Des Moines which was carried by both the local and national media. The Department of Veterans Affairs took notice and ordered a formal investigation which was conducted by Rabbi Kronick (a noted medical ethicist as well as the Associate Director of Chaplains for the Department of Veterans Affairs). Chaplain Kronick's investigation confirmed not only all of my assertions, but found other egregious policy violations that negatively impacted my care. But most important of all, with the assistance of Ross Perot, you worked tirelessly to secure treatment for me at the Dallas, Texas V.A. Medical Center.

As a disabled veteran living on a fixed income there was no way I could have afforded either the trip to Dallas or the cost of staying in a hotel near the Dallas V.A. Hospital; but once again you came to my rescue. The MRFF helped out as much as it could and I know that you kicked in money from your own pocket. You and I also worked together to assemble a group of supporters that included personal friends, Rabbi Haim Dov Beliak of [jewsonfirst.com](http://jewsonfirst.com), the Jewish Federation of Portland, Oregon (where I had lived and been active in the Jewish community for years), the Jewish Federation of Dallas, Texas and others who covered my expenses; and when that money ran out, Ross Perot pitched in.



Mr. Perot picked up the tab for my hotel room the last week I was in Dallas, and while I was there he often called me personally to make sure I was okay and was being given first rate treatment. Those calls meant so much to me; I couldn't believe that someone of his stature cared enough to take the time to personally check up on me. (Of course it goes without saying that you also personally called me nearly daily, and often more than once a day, to check up on me.) Additionally, Mr. Perot regularly called the medical director of the Dallas V.A. to advocate for my care.

I will never forget the morning I showed up for the procedure to remove my kidney stones: about mid-morning the medical director came into my hospital room and asked me how I was doing. He stuck around for some time, personally ensuring that I was being well taken care of. After a while he got up the courage to ask me how I knew Mr. Perot and I was able to tell him about you, the MRFF and how you had personally contacted Mr. Perot and asked him to assist me. Then the medical director asked me, "Do you feel like we're taking care of you?" I responded in the affirmative, and he asked me then, "Do you think you could do me a favor and call Mr. Perot then, and let him know we're taking care of you? He's been calling me ever 15 minutes on my personal cell phone just to make sure, and I really do have other work I need to do." Of course I was happy to call Mr. Perot and let him know everything was okay. I'm not sure anyone can even imagine how good that made me feel.

It's been a year now since my journey to Dallas, and recent events have led me to decide it was time I wrote and made clear how things have changed for me. First of all, as you well know, I have been honored to join the MRFF team in its vital work to advocate for the religious freedoms of veterans – I am now the Director of Veterans Affairs (a voluntary position) for the Military Religious Freedom Foundation, and in that capacity I have the privilege of working with veterans across the Country to advocate for their Constitutional Rights as well as both their physical and psychological well-being. But that's not all. As a disabled veteran I live on a small, fixed budget; but every month I am proud to send what small amount of money I can afford to support the work of the MRFF.

The sad truth is that the Bush Administration has not only turned its back on our veterans, but has become their adversary through government sponsored religious intolerance and outright discrimination. Americans everywhere are rightfully ashamed by the manner in which our servicemen/women and veterans have been neglected and even targeted for abuse by their government. I couldn't live with myself if I didn't do everything in my power to improve the lives of those who have sacrificed and continue to sacrifice so much for our nation. Further, I am proud of my military service and take seriously (just like you, Mikey) the oath I swore when I entered the military, to uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States. I'll be damned if I sit idly by and ignore those who have risked their futures, their lives to defend the same Constitution and the same nation we all cherish.

But that's not the end of the story. This week the kidney pain returned and I ended up back in the emergency room of the Iowa City V.A. Medical Center. A CAT scan confirmed that I have kidney stones once again. But this time it's different. Sure, coming forward, going public with the religious discrimination I've experienced here, cost me something; I've experienced first hand the somatic reality – the tremendous pain – of reprisals, and for months when I showed up at the local V.A. Hospital or clinic for an appointment I was even greeted by other veterans who saw my yarmulke or recognized me from the local TV news (veterans who do not share my views regarding religious tolerance or comprehend the value of the constitutionally mandated wall of separation between Church and State) and made comments such as, "There's that fucking Jew!" But I also now know what it feels like to come out the other end of a long, dark night filled with pain, because this time I didn't have the same experience.

Last year the doctors in the urology clinic at the Iowa City V.A. Medical Center virtually taunted me, and despite my seven kidney stones accused me of drug-seeking and refused me treatment; this year they have gone out of their way to treat me both promptly and humanely. They have gone out of their way to ensure I was cared for – a 180 degree turnabout from last year. One could say, "What a difference a year makes." But I say, "What a difference Mikey Weinstein and the Military Religious Freedom

Foundation makes." If you hadn't, at some personal cost, stood up for me I know absolutely that I wouldn't be getting the care I am receiving, and deserve, today. Mikey, simply put, any "thank you" I could give you would be inadequate. What I can do, however, and what I will do is follow your example and pursue my volunteer work for the MRFF with both dedication and vigor; and I will continue to send the MRFF my few dollars every month to help in my own small way support the work the MRFF does for the military personnel and veterans who are more than deserving of every ounce of our sacrifice. In truth, I only wish I could do more.

In regards to others who may have opportunity to read this: regardless whether you're a Jew, Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, Wiccan, Agnostic, Atheist, etc., Republican, Democrat, Independent or even political at all, whether or not you belong to any group, sect, denomination or fit neatly into any one demographic, to care about those who have and are sacrificing their lives for our Country, you just have to refuse to be complacent – a decision that recognizes the value of our shared humanity, a decision that echoes the intrinsic suppositions of our Nation's Constitution.

We are all faced with choices everyday; you can choose to support our military personnel and veterans, or you can choose to look the other way. I choose to get busy and do my part, give of myself and out of my own small resources. Don't you think you can afford a few dollars or a little effort to support our troops and our veterans? In regards to those of you who are currently serving our country in the Armed Forces and those who have already served, if you are being discriminated against, bullied or threatened because of your particular faith or even no faith, I know it feels like a risk to come forward and ask for help – believe me, I've been there, I know what reprisals feel like – but I also know what it's like on the other end; trust me, it's worth the risk. Let Mikey and the rest of us help; we honor your service and will not fail to do everything in our power to improve your situation and ensure that your life, safety, personal religious choice and well-being are respected and protected.

Respectfully,

Akiva David Miller

Director of Veterans Affairs  
Military Religious Freedom Foundation  
Iowa City, Iowa



Mikey,

I would like to sincerely thank you for all your help throughout my hectic disenrollment process. You took my calls and questions at all times of the day, and demonstrated genuine determination and dedication to my case. It disappoints me that some members of the Air Force (most notably my former chain) do not stand by their subordinates if it is not convenient or popular. You have never even met me, and you did more for me than anyone else involved with the case, in four months. Your advice will always stay with me as I foray into life after the Academy. Thank you again, sir.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Very Respectfully,

(name withheld)



To: MRFF and Mr. Weinstein

I am so grateful. Today, I had an appointment with the Veterans Affairs here on Fort [installation name withheld]. As you may know, there was a very religious [evangelical Christian] poster and placard in a high traffic area of the office. I notified the MRFF and it is

now gone! I can see the screws and velcro that once held it up. Now the VA office feels more accepting to me and inclusive. I don't feel that my beliefs are somehow inferior. Thank you, MRFF!

[name, rank and unit withheld]



Mr. Weinstein,

I would like to thank you and your fine organization for your help in resolving a situation here at (military installation, City and State withheld). During the past 6-7 months a unit commander, who is now the Deputy Group Commander decided to send mass e-mails to the wing regarding bible study sessions. These are sessions that were led by the individual sending the e-mails...a person in a command position, clearly a conflict of interest. A lot of us expressed concern about the perception that leadership is endorsing what should clearly be a chaplain endorsed and led activity.

Just imagine the following scenario.... if you were a young Airman wanting to look good for a Below the Zone package, the Deputy Group Commander is leading a bible study, a young impressionable person might show up to be visible to leadership and seeing the example of the Deputy Group Commander might decide to encourage others to do so as well. This kind of activity is in the purview of the Chaplain Corps, not people in leadership positions. Some of us were told to just delete the e-mails. Being a religious (religious denomination withheld), and an NCO I could not stand idly by as the latest e-mail, from a person in a command position NOT the Chaplain, showed up in my inbox. Being in fear of possible retribution for speaking out through the channels normally available, I decided to contact MRFF. As MRFF will aggressively defend those that decide to take the brave step to submit information of an incident to them. MRFF and Mr. Weinstein took aggressive action, the same day I e-mailed them to end this situation, action that made it up to the highest levels of leadership. This kind of action and attention is something that could not be achieved through existing channels available to us service

members. I am fully confident that through the actions of the MRFF and Mr. Weinstein that situations like this will not occur again.

Once again, I would like to thank MRFF and Mr. Weinstein for their attention in this matter. MRFF is the last bastion of defense that ensures religious freedom and toleration for all...believers and non-believers. I encourage anyone who has benefitted from the assistance that the MRFF provides to donate to the cause, any contribution can help ensure that MRFF can continue to help us who wear the uniform.

(Please keep my name, rank, squadron and duty station anonymous.)

V/R,

(name, rank, USAF Specialty Code, Position and Military Unit Withheld)



Dear Mr. Weinstein,

Just wanted to give you an update regarding the Airman/Soldier Bibles (with the respective official service seal on the cover) being carried at the (USAF installation name withheld) Air Force Base BX. Just literally hours after I made initial contact with the MRFF a very senior general officer contacted me regarding this issue and promised to look into it. At that point he promised he would do what he could to get these Bibles removed from the shelves of the BX. Satisfied with his sincerity I consider the matter closed. However, today at of the blue I received a followup call from the general saying the issue had been elevated to the Department of Defense General Counsel's Office to investigate why the official service seals of the USAF, U.S. Army, Navy and Marines Corps were on these Bibles to begin with. Needless to say this was a very pleasant surprise.

I want to thank you and the Foundation for your efforts. As an active duty Air Force Judge Advocate I have very little doubt that this outcome is far different than anything I could have hoped for going through other official USAF complaint channels. As an Air Force officer (and a lawyer) it is very rare that I personally feel intimidated about making sure my Constitutional civil rights rights are unimpeded as I clearly did on this occasion.

However, I know that the situation is far different for my far more vulnerable junior enlisted brothers and sisters in the U.S. military that may be deprived of their Constitutional rights. Your work, and the work of the MRFF, to give a voice to the powerless is so very much appreciated and is truly invaluable.

With my Greatest Respect to you and all MRFF staff and supporters,

(USAF Officer's/JAG's name, rank, military unit and military installation withheld)



Mikey, This is a Great, Great win for all—and I say this from my perspective of a senior Air Force officer with over 25 years of service who's been involved in the fight since the foundation of the Military Religious Freedom Foundation (MRFF). While I know there were many, many MRFF clients out there that played a role in this affair—and helped highlight the need for such a statement—I've got to think that the Vandenberg issue ("Jesus Loves Nukes") must've gotten this ball rolling. In many ways, this is THE definitive, documented win for MRFF and you and your staff are to be congratulated on a monumental scale. I know that thousands of us out here are saying, "About Damn Time!" while we sigh and actually feel good about our Air Force on this issue for the first time in a long time. I could go on and on, but thank you, thank you, thank you for generating this kind of bedrock-shaking response from the most senior leader of our Air Force—we know it was MRFF that was the primary catalyst.

For those reading this from outside the military, to help them better understand the magnitude of this achievement, they must consider that the bureaucracy it takes to issue a letter like this is extensive—even if the Chief of Staff says he wants it "tomorrow". Actually, it's mind-boggling. I know because I've worked there (in the Pentagon) in multiple capacities during my career. Just the legal review and getting all of the staff on board is daunting. It really took ALL of the Pentagon because you know the other services had to be aware of this, as did the Secretary of Defense and all senior Dept of Defense leadership because this letter puts pressure on other DoD organizations to do the same. I'm sure

every word here is polished like a diamond and very carefully chosen. It's EXTREMELY rare for a military (or government) leader to make such a statement that is now part of the public record and able to be referenced by ALL who serve. I know Gen Schwartz hasn't always had the ramrod backbone or responsiveness on some issues that we would've liked to see, but for a 4-star—the ultimate USAF corporate man—to send out a letter like this is very, very brave and important. Without heaping too much praise on the Chief of Staff, though, I'm also pragmatic enough to realize that he NEVER would have done this without MRFF's unrelenting pressure. MRFF has helped him do the right thing and for that I'll be forever grateful to YOU—as will your thousands of supporters and clients. Today, I am proud to be a 25+ year member of the US Air Force.

(Senior USAF Officer's name, rank, AFSC, position and military installation withheld)



Dear MRFF,

Thanks for forwarding the letter below from one our dedicated faculty and staff here at USAFA. I couldn't say it better myself—I'm just bewildered by the whole situation. We're constantly reminded that we should maintain and enforce an environment of respect and that we should trust our senior leadership at USAFA—both admirable goals. But, when the Chief of Staff of OUR Air Force, the direct boss of our commander sends a signed letter with specific instructions for ALL commanders throughout the Air Force, and weeks later we at USAFA only get to see it because of external press releases, internet links, MRFF news alerts, and by forwarded e-mails from colleagues in the outside Air Force, it's very hard for us to believe that our leadership respects US, nor do they trust US with a firsthand read of our Chief's guidance.

The letter came to me from an acquaintance working in another Major Command after the MAJCOM commander had sent it down through his chain to include ALL commanders instantly upon receipt. A first lieutenant was sending this out throughout an organization commanded by a colonel—and I got the letter more than a week ago. Still, though, nothing from USAFA to the faculty, cadets, and staff—at an institution where the



professor is considered the “Commander in the Classroom,” and has daily contact with the future leaders of our Air Force. Next, an article hits Air Force Times this week about the Chief’s letter and still nothing at USAFA—not even a citation of the article in our daily, morning news clip that contain almost everything about USAFA found on a Google search of the media.

I can’t for the life of me understand the motivation for not forwarding such a watershed letter of instruction from our CSAF to all leaders throughout the Air Force. No reasonable person could imagine that it would not gain widespread distribution anyway, so why NOT send it to everyone in your organization immediately? It’s from your boss—he won’t get mad—just do it.

It’s more clear than ever to me that USAFA’s leadership can talk the talk, but when our most senior leader decides that he wants everyone to walk the walk, too, USAFA senior leadership stumbles badly.

(Senior USAF Academy Official’s name, rank, position withheld)



Mikey, do you have any knowledge as to why Lt. Gen. Gould has refused to distribute the Sep. 1, '11 “Religious Neutrality” letter which the USAF Chief of Staff, Gen. Schwartz sent to the entire Air Force? There are many of us here at USAFA who were overjoyed to see this letter from the Chief. We only saw it when you sent it to us and then it was in the media some, too. We have to live in the awful atmosphere here at USAFA of extreme religious intolerance everyday. Intolerance which favors only one religion, extreme Christianity. And I’m a Christian too. Gen. Schwartz’s letter is seen as a “Godsend” here, no pun intended. Noone in the USAF needs to read it and fall in line with it more than USAFA staff and cadet leadership here. Lt. Gen. Gould has only further worsened an already intolerable situation here at USAFA by refusing to send this letter from Gen. Schwartz out to all of us here. It’s all anyone is now whispering about. If we did not before see Lt. Gen. Gould’s true colors, we sure do now. And he wonders why we all have no place to turn but to the Military Religious Freedom Foundation?

(USAF Academy Graduate and USAFA Staff Member's name, rank, position withheld)



Mikey,

What kind of circus is Lt Gen Gould running here? He's been the ringleader since he arrived, taking the Dean and Comm as sideshow assistants, and scamming all the taxpayers with smoke and mirrors. This just makes me sick to my stomach. Absolutely no mention of Gen Schwartz's letter of religious neutrality. You would think that something as significant as this letter would make it down to all personnel at USAFA, especially the cadets. Hasn't been a single peep from the people behind the curtain. Nothing to see here!

Were we surprised when Lt Gen Gould stood up on stage to deliver the command perspective on DADT training, then immediately left the stage while forcing a Capt to give the briefing to the entire base? Pretty strong message there, boss! Why don't you tell us how you really feel?

Were we surprised when the Gamble report came out with much fanfare, telling everyone that absolutely nothing was wrong at the AFA? They patted themselves on the back at what a great job they were doing misleading the masses. What a joke!

I don't think this lack of concern about religious neutrality surprises us at all. It's no wonder all complaints about the dominionist machine of the AFA route right back to MRFF. With mostly evangelical christian chaplains backing up the religiously rabid senior staff here, personnel with problems have nowhere to turn. What an extremely toxic environment in which we all live and work. The Constitution will prevail, MRFF will always be victorious, and so will Gen Schwartz's direction to the rest of the AF. Just don't expect the current AFA administration to bat an eye about this. They'll continue to speak loudly about diversity and inclusion as they are completely incapable of actually implementing these policies.

Thanks for supporting us when our own leaders do not, Mikey.

Name, Rank, and USAF Academy Position Withheld



I heard that the Dean passed out hard copies of the letter to department heads only at a meeting yesterday afternoon. A few department heads may have scanned the letter and sent it out—or obtained an electronic version and sent it out—but there was no direction to do so from the Dean. I do not know if the letter’s been distributed electronically or otherwise in the other mission elements (military or athletic). She said that it would be appropriate to use the letter during future scenario-based training sessions, but so far the Academy leadership has not sent an electronic copy of the letter in the type of blanket, base-wide e-mail (called “Dist P”) that is used to announce prayer luncheons and chaplains programs or the need for volunteers at a wild cow-milking competition (see two examples below). Apparently, wild cow-milking is more important than CSAF guidance here.

(USAF Academy Official’s name, rank, USAF Academy Unit and position withheld)



I wish I had the words Mikey. I wish I had the vocabulary to express how deep my thanks goes to you, MRFF, and everyone you call “client”, for standing up at great risk to their career to support our Constitution. In my 25+ years of service I’ve never seen, nor heard of, a General Officer regardless of status or position, put into words our obligation to Religious Equality, and I’ve NEVER seen a ‘directive reminder’ to support our Constitution.

The highest Air Force authority has (FINALLY) stated loud and clear for all Airman to hear—-Support and Defend the Constitution! General Schwartz has reminded every Air Force member from the youngest new Airman to the seasoned Officer, our Oath is REAL, our duty to the Constitution is not an option, and Service Before Self means putting the greater good of our Constitution before a personal spiritual belief.

While our Chief of Staff is now viewed as a “trend setter” in DoD, we all know what made this possible—-YOU. Truly a great victory for you Mikey, a great victory for MRFF, and even greater victory for all who serve in the greatest military on earth.

I salute you Mikey.

Thank you.

(name withheld)



I am a soldier in the United States Army. I was raised as a Southern Baptist. Today I was attending graduation practice for my AIT graduation. When we arrived at the chapel where the ceremony is taking place in, I saw the plan for graduation included a prayer. When we reached that part, we were told we were required to bow our heads and cross our hands in front of us. I immediately pointed out that not only is a prayer at a public ceremony unconstitutional, but to force someone to give the illusion of religion when the individual does not believe in any religion is blatantly wrong and very illegal. Instantly the rest of my platoon groaned and said to suck it up, stop complaining, etc. I stood my ground while the sergeant in charge said the same thing, albeit more politely. When I sat down, I immediately e-mailed Mikey Weinstein of the Military Religious Freedom Foundation about the incident. He quickly responded to my email with his phone number. I went into the bathroom to make the call. However, partway through a sergeant came in and told me to get off and come outside the bathroom. My call remained connected, and the sergeants berated me for jumping the chain of command, although where consulting a lawyer violates the chain of command was never pointed out. I was then sent to see my company commander and 1st SG. I told them my issue and was again told it was unfounded. I was told that if I did not bow my head and clasp my hands that I would be subject to UCMJ punitive action. As I refuse to compromise on my beliefs, the idea that my military career could be cut short due to standing up for my beliefs frightened me. I was told I could do it or call the inspector general. When I returned to the chapel, I asked my

cadre if I could call IG. He told me to wait until after practice. I was then again ridiculed by my peers, however I stood my ground. Shortly thereafter, my commander came to me and told me that bowing was now suddenly “optional” and that I could remain at attention. Mr. Weinstein moved remarkably fast on this, and I believe that my cadre’s knowledge that I already had a lawyer from the Military Religious Freedom Foundation in the loop is what caused them to change their blatantly unconstitutional order. My fear of punishment for standing up for my beliefs is gone, and knowing how quickly the MRFF can move to help soldier’s whose rights are violated gives me a high level of confidence. Their work to get the numerous promotions of religion in the military out is a great service to the entire armed forces.

(U.S. Army Soldier’s name, rank, military unit and military installation withheld)



To: MRFF and Mikey Weinstein

Mikey, I was one of the West Point faculty members on the emergency conference call with you last night. Thank you from all of us for taking that call. I am now the unofficial spokesperson for a twenty-seven of us on the faculty (more will joining shortly too) here who are of like mind on the terrible choice by West Point in inviting retired Lt. General William Boykin to be the featured speaker at the West Point “National Prayer Breakfast” on February 8. Mikey, I am a West Point graduate and I am a Protestant. In fact, all twenty-seven of us are either Protestant or Roman Catholic. I am also a multiple-tour, Iraq/Afghanistan heavy combat veteran, much of it hand-to-hand. I am a decorated combat soldier as are many of my colleagues who have reached out to you and the MRFF. I could go on for pages about the insane idiocy of extending this invitation to the anti-Muslim bigot Boykin but I don’t have the time to compose that tome. Suffice it to say that the horrible consequences of the prejudiced message sent ’round-the-world by this official West Point invitation to Boykin is all but incalculable. The true price to be exacted, by

granting this high profile speaking engagement to the bigot Boykin, will shamefully be paid in blood, and the blood of innocents. The President of the United States, the Secretary of Defense, and the most senior U.S. Army leadership have made it absolutely imperative to win the hearts and minds of our Islamic allies, and potential allies, by making it clear that Americans are NOT Christian crusaders who hate Muslims. That mantra is the prime maxim for all of our troops in combat down range in Afghanistan and elsewhere in Islamic lands. This rubric is what we are all supposed to be teaching our West Point cadets from Day One here at the Academy. It is so sad to see the West Point spin controllers in Public Affairs trying to justify the unjustifiable by arguing that having this hater Boykin speak at this particular religious event will somehow “broaden the intellectual horizons” of our Corps of Cadets. That assertion is specious and transparently a lie and very poorly articulated lie at that. Let me, on behalf of the other West Point faculty I represent, make this one point very clear to you, Mikey; though it violates our United States Constitution and the sworn oaths we all took to support and defend it, West Point has an “official religion” and it’s evangelical/fundamentalist Christianity. And THAT is precisely why this prejudiced racist Boykin has been invited to disgrace our Academy with his Islamophobic filth at this religious event. We know that you know this fact. We thank you, Mikey and the MRFF, for being there to represent all of us because if any of us raised even the slightest hand in protest, the consequences would be devastating to both our professional and personal lives. Please don’t think less of us because of our fears to come forward publicly. Please help us get West Point to withdraw this speaking invitation to a man who aggressively hates so many for simply existing as human beings.

(West Point Faculty Member’s name, rank, title and Faculty Department withheld)



Mr. Weinstein,

as one of the leaders of the more than 100 USAF Academy cadets in our invisible group who have to live a constant lie by pretending to be “the right flavor of motivated Christian”, I thank you on behalf of all of us for exposing the “Counter Insurgency” efforts against MRFF (and its clients) of Academy Dean of the Faculty Brig. Gen. Dana Born. She, General Gould and so many others here actively work to seek out and destroy those of us who try to live here despite the Christian bullying, which is never ending. “Insurgents”? That would be me and the others, I guess. Have you seen that the person, a retired AF general, who ran campus Crusade for Christ (called “CRU” here at the Academy) for the armed forces for many years, has an honored speaking engagement at this year’s Nation Character and Leadership Symposium? It takes place in a couple of weeks here. Other “Correct Christians” will be speaking as well. And no amount of “non-Christain speakers” ever balances out the obvious proselytizing from the evangelizing ones. CRU’s official goal has always been to make sure that every USAFA cadet graduates as a “government paid missionary for Jesus Christ”. We have all seen the video tape which MRFF has exposed of this very truth. But this happens every day and night here. Survival depends on not being known as an “insurgent”. If you are found out, it will be all over. We’ve gotten real good at not being seen. The Dean’s “counter insurgency” order more than proves what we all see all the time here. That she tried to hide this fact by even lying about it under oath only terrifies everybody even more so. That was so messed up. You, Mr. Weinstein, know the names of some of those who have been ruined. The Christian religion molesters here hide behind their rank and power and privilege. We “hide” behind our “disguises” as “approved Christians”. They say we don’t exist. The “Counter Insurgency” from the Dean and her lying about it proves how much they know we do. And how much they want us eliminated. Game On. “I Am Spartacus”.

(USAF Academy Cadet's name, Cadet rank, Cadet Wing Title and Position and Cadet Squadron withheld)



good afternoon

Dear Mikey,

Today is a great day for because i want to inform that i finally got the us citizenship , and i would like to thank you MIKEY and the MRFF for all the efforts that you put into making this happend , i can't thank you enough for being there for me 24/7 for moral and financial support . it means a lot to me after the hardship i went through ,

and i am sure you will be there for every person in the united states armed forces that needs help and support ,

thank you

(name withheld)



I need to take a moment and thank you and MRFF, and to sound a call to action. I've been in the military for over 20 years - National Guard and Active Duty, enlisted and officer. I have been to Bosnia, Afghanistan, and Iraq. I have seen my brothers killed and wounded,



and I've had stuff blowing up around me. In these places, religious extremism is the order of the day, and it's easy to see the chaos, madness, and ruin that result from it. It is truly ugly.

Unfortunately, we have a similar brand of religious extremism in America, with legions of organizations dedicated to transforming the military into divine warriors. Many of us have suffered civil rights abuses at the hands of these organizations and their minions in the ranks. This is unacceptable, and while many servicemembers see that extremism for what it is and have a strong desire to fight back, we simply can't afford to engage in a public scuffle. You and MRFF have bravely stepped up and accepted the dirty, thankless job of fighting that extremism on the home front.

The latest battle involves Ray Giunta showing up as the guest speaker at a Pentagon prayer breakfast. This guy is a Christian fundamentalist, and a known liar and con artist, yet the Pentagon chaplain's office still wants him to come! I am appalled that the military would willingly associate with this fraud. It's disgraceful, and his presence there makes a mockery of the freedoms I have fought for. Please do everything in your power to convince the Pentagon to rescind Giunta's invitation.

Thank you Mikey and MRFF for giving us a voice. Thank you Mikey and MRFF for giving us a way to push back. Thank you Mikey and MRFF for taking up the fight.



(Active Duty U.S. Army Officer's name, rank, MOS, assigned military unit and military installation all withheld)

To: Mikey Weinstein and the MRFF

I am the United States Navy sailor, my rank is (rank withheld) stationed on board the aircraft carrier USS (name withheld), CVN- (numerical designation withheld), who

contacted you yesterday about being unduly proselytized to by my unit's CO, (name and rank withheld). I was out of options. Did not know what to do? Talked to my dad (retired Navy) and my wife. They recommended to ask MRFF for the help needed. All I can say is that when my next duty shift started today I was ordered to my CO's CO and his CO was there too. They apologized for what had happened and told me of the corrective procedures taken against my unit's CO. I cannot reveal what has been done. Wish I could. But let me say that it is so perfect I cannot believe it is going down that way! To fit the "crime" I mean. Neither me nor any of the crew I lead will even have to see our former CO for quite a while. Apparently my problem with him was not the first such time. Yesterday was my worst day in the Navy. But today is my best day thanks to the MRFF! I have never seen such a fast and productive response.

Mr. Weinstein and the MRFF, I do not know what you did? But you did it in way less than a day from my contacting you. Just so you know, I am a Protestant. My brother in law is a ordained pastor and he married my wife and me. He also baptized each of our 4 kids. My family and I cannot thank all of you ever enough. I am sending the MRFF url website to every sailor I know on board our vessel and the whole Navy!

v/r

(U.S. Navy Sailor's name, rank, unit and assigned ship all withheld)



Mikey ~

I have watched the recent vicious and vindictive dialog regarding you personally, and more generally, throttling your and MRFF's communication with the Pentagon, with much

incredulity. As a retired, multiple-star, senior officer (General or Admiral) you know that I was asked by the Chief of Staff of my military Service (a 4 star General or Admiral and a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff) to be my Service's direct day-to-day interface with you. During those three years, and specifically because of that relationship, my Service avoided countless (I believe in excess of 3 dozen) events of potential Constitutional breaches of religious civil rights – which we were able to resolve quickly, and quietly. Mikey, when you revealed these potential abuses by officials in my armed forces Service, I contacted the Command Section of the responsible agency (usually 3-star Generals or Admirals) who took actions to fix the situation. Many times that “fix action” was accomplished in hours....not weeks. As a result we were able to avoid/fix situations which could potentially have been seriously detrimental to military good order and discipline, ensure we were in compliance with the oaths we all swore to protect and defend the United States Constitution, and avoid what would have otherwise clearly been negative media exposure.

It was the continuing relationship between you & me (thus, my branch of the armed forces) that precluded embarrassing situations because, in many cases, we could quickly implement fix actions to the problem MRFF first identified and swiftly brought to our attention. Further, as a direct result of this relationship, we had military Service-wide policies written/documented for our entire Service to follow!!

I'm stupefied by suggestions of severing a relationship which worked so well for my Service. As you know, we were not able to fix everything MRFF identified...but the most senior DoD leadership was sensitized to ensuring we were being true to..."support and defend the Constitution of the United States" which every officer of the US Armed Forces swears as an oath. I'd be glad to discuss this with mutually-approved, and appropriately high-level, decision makers....to convince them I'm not a ghost manufactured by MRFF.

It was an honor to help my branch of the Armed Forces and to be your General Officer or Admiral contact in my armed forces Service branch.

(Recently retired General's or Admiral's name, rank and Pentagon title and position all withheld)



# Partnerships

"Veterans for Common Sense, a non-profit veteran advocacy organization with more than 12,000 members based in Washington, DC, strongly endorses the lawsuit filed by the Military Religious Freedom Foundation against the Department of Defense. We believe strongly in our Constitution, especially the essential separation of church and state that has helped our Nation avoid the disastrous religious persecution and religious wars that plagued Europe before and after our Revolutionary War. We support the rights of our service members to exercise their religious beliefs as well as to hold no religious preference at all. We believe our soldiers should free from intimidation and proselytizing, because our Constitution clearly states that there shall be no religious test for government employment. VCS demands and end to the current military policy of ignoring efforts by outside groups to proselytize within our military.

"Regarding the Bible Pathway Ministries effort to provide materials so our service members in Iraq may "minister to the local residents," VCS condemns the current military practice of turning a blind eye toward the illegal proselytizing of Iraqi citizens by our service members. This must stop immediately, before it further inflames an already extremely violent war within Iraq, especially after the incident where a U.S. service member used a Koran for rifle target practice.

"VCS worked recently with the MRFF to expose the proselytizing by a top government official responsible for processing disability claims at the Department of Veterans Affairs. In February 2008, former Under Secretary for Benefits Daniel Cooper was forced to resign two years early under an ethics cloud after he participated in a religious fundraising and proselytizing video using his name and official government title."

Paul Sullivan

Executive Director

Veterans for Common Sense



Good job, Mikey.

VCS will post the MOAA interview at VCS. Without a doubt, the unconstitutional activities of a small band of chaplains is actively undermining our military, especially the mental health services soldiers need after fighting in combat.

Our Constitution is very clear: “ ... No religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States.” And that applies to our service members who are Federal employees.

I especially appreciate your comment on the impact of aggressive proselytizing on our combat veterans. While some in the military may see the proselytizing by this band of extremists as a Constitutionally protected nuisance, this group does not believe in our Constitution. Therefore, they are a grave internal threat to our military, the military that defends our Constitution they ignore.

Many veterans that I have personally interviewed and referred to VA mental healthcare have serious crises of faith because they feel misled and betrayed by some proselytizing chaplains. The veterans, when they were soldiers in combat, were sent to chaplains for mental healthcare, often due to the lack of psychologists and psychiatrists on the battlefield, especially during the early part of the Iraq War. Instead of spiritual or psychological assistance, some soldiers were intensely proselytized by some chaplains, and some soldiers converted to extreme views of Christianity.

The proselytizing was a strong and temporary placebo – convincing the soldier to keep pulling the trigger, in this case for Christ in a Crusade against Islam. The long-term spiritual consequences, when the placebo wears off, are absolutely devastating on some of these veterans broken to the core by the lies that sent them to war, the horrors of war, the religious fanatics who kept them fighting, and by a VA sometimes unable to provide prompt and high-quality healthcare and benefits. Those extremists promoting religious war by our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan truly undermine our mission for their personal gain.

VCS strongly agrees with your ending message that our officers need to cut out the bullshit – they need to stop some of these chaplains from abusing their rank and honor of providing spiritual guidance to our combat soldiers. The criminal CFGC, operated out of a garage and without official mainstream church support, must get booted from the military, as they stain the reputation of our nation, our military, and our chaplains and their actions are both reprehensible and unconstitutional.

Best,

Paul Sullivan

Executive Director

Veterans for Common Sense



Dear Mr. Weinstein:

My name is Jeremy Shaver and I serve as Executive Director of the Interfaith Alliance of Colorado. One of our members and volunteers, Peter Shultz, has been in touch with you about MRFF's challenge of the Evans Army Community Hospital emblem. As promised, here is our statement of support:

*The Interfaith Alliance of Colorado supports the Military Religious Freedom Foundation's effort to change or discontinue the use of the Evans Army Community Hospital emblem.*

*"The emblem's spiked cross and motto clearly violates the required religious neutrality expected of all branches of the U.S. Government. We do not believe tax-payer funded government agencies and buildings should sport a religious symbol," said Jeremy Shaver, Executive Director for the Interfaith Alliance of Colorado. "It is the hospital's responsibility and obligation to care for the physical well-being of our women and men serving*

*in the United States military. The message portrayed by the hospital's emblem is that one particular faith is superior and that all other believers, or those without a faith tradition, have second class status. The Interfaith Alliance of Colorado believes in the equality of all religious traditions and strongly endorses the separation of religion and government as the ideal expression of the religion clauses of the First Amendment of the Constitution."*

*The Interfaith Alliance of Colorado is an 800-member organization that protects religious freedom in Colorado. Its members come from 20 different faith traditions, as well as those without a faith tradition.*

Please keep us informed of progress and let us know if we can be of further assistance, including sending action alerts to our members. Good luck!

Best wishes,

Jeremy J. Shaver, M.Div.

Executive Director

Interfaith Alliance of Colorado



Dear MRFF,

Keep up the good work. I believe promoting Christianity in the military plays into the self-serving interests of the Pentagon and those politicians, defense contractors, and



energy companies that stand to profit from endless wars in Muslim countries. It's sort of a stealth way of at least symbolically privatizing our troops into mercenaries on a "mission."

Your exposing this angle - and its long term consequences - may help bring more support to your side. My TRUTHOUT writer friend Nick Mottern & I have gotten some exposure of the planned trans-Afghan pipeline, perhaps the real reason why we need 140,000 troops to go after the 80 or so Al Qaida left in that country.

The Christianist angle, and the poverty draft of this Great Recession, appear to be able to keep these wars going for some time to come. And it's costing us. Fort Drum, near where I live, has lost 256 troops so far, some on their fourth combat tour.

Roland Van Deusen  
Veterans For Peace  
Clayton NY



Dear Mr. Schaeffer-

As a longtime supporter of MRFF and Mikey Weinstein, I'd like to thank you for your various interviews on behalf of religious freedom and freedom from religious zealotry. If it's any help in the future, please feel free to let the world know that we, California Council of Churches IMPACT are supporters of Mikey's work. We represent 1.5 million members within the mainstream Protestant communities of faith in CA, and we have as little enthusiasm for reconstructionist theocracy as he and you do. We've had our mainstream chaplains in the military receive as much pressure as the enlisted people, and it's wonderful to have as articulate a spokesperson as you speak out against such pressure and coercion.

If citing our support lends credence to your affirmation that this is NOT an anti-Christian pogrom from Mikey and MRFF, please draw on our endorsement as evidence. We thank you so much for being present on this and other religious freedom issues.

Whenever I know you'll be on Rachel Maddow, I make sure to watch since you add a powerful dimension to this body of information.

Thank you for all you are doing.

Warmest regards-

(name withheld)



California Council of Churches IMPACT has made an alliance with the Military Religious Freedom Foundation that works to guarantee freedom of religion for the men and women in our military.

CCCI has long supported the separation of church and state as an essential guarantee that we all may worship as we choose. We also believe our government and our defense system have one goal – preserving our Constitution. It cannot be the promoter of any religious view at all. If America adopts a dominant theology, how can any of us be free?

None of us can be ignorant of the “culture wars” that exist today that have already resulted in violence. The angry signs and presence of guns at “tea party” rallies is chilling to those of us who believe in mutual respect for one another, even in difference. The upsurge in numbers of open hate groups and acts of violence – even murder – of those with whom some disagree, is deeply worrisome.

Last Friday, April 30, I was asked to speak at an award ceremony for the Military Religious Freedom Foundation in Albuquerque, NM. I was accepting an award for author Jeff Sharlet who wrote an amazing book on one facet of religious extremism in America, a group known as the “Fellowship” or “The Family”. He was unable to be present, and I was honored to receive the Thomas Jefferson First Amendment award from MRFF on his

behalf. I was also honored to sit with the second recipient, actor Ed Asner, whose work for MRFF and many other civil rights issues is long and distinguished.

What I did not know is that even as I accepted the award and talked about CCC IMPACT, outside the building a man was being arrested for suspicious behavior. He had been cruising back and forth either looking for a way in or waiting for us to emerge. He was found to be armed.

MRFF has been very outspoken against religious proselytizing in and by our military. MRFF is strongly supportive of all faiths, including that of our diverse Christian member denominations, having the right of conscience without coercion inside the military. They oppose the presence, as sanctioned speakers, of those individuals who promulgate disrespect for religious diversity and especially those who preach hate toward another faith. To this end, they recently had gotten a prominent evangelist, whose radical anti-Muslim stance is well-known, disinvited as the guest speaker for a national event at the Pentagon.

The eruption of hate email toward MRFF was shocking in its violence and threats against MRFF, its founder Mikey Weinstein and his family. The email all carry the assertion that “America is a Christian nation” and that MRFF’s work for religious freedom for all is the work of the devil, anti-Christian, or worse. The Weinstein family has had armed security for years, thanks to this vitriol. It was appalling to me that affirmation of religious freedom for ALL people would engender this kind of wrath.

A number of you have already responded to the upsurge in hate and disruption in our state and nation. You went to Town Hall meetings last summer, cooled the anger, and brought “holy manners” into the fray. You worked to have people listen to one another, respect one another’s fears, and help one another find some kind of understanding. You stilled much of those troubled waters, and for that we thank you more than we can say.

And is that not the work of faith as we believe it, live it, practice it?

While the event in Albuquerque was unnerving, the idea that people can kill those with whom they disagree is deeply chilling. We at California Council of Churches and

Church IMPACT work for justice for all people, and that includes people of faith with whom we do not agree. We have a powerful directive to be inclusive of all of God's people, and the fearful specter of rising violence towards us, towards others in the Abrahamic faiths and all of the world's great faiths or those who practice no faith – all of this violence and hostility is deeply worrisome.

America was founded on religious freedom as a core principle. That cannot come to an end or none of us shall be free. Freedom of religion is not ever made manifest from the barrel of a gun. Not in Albuquerque. Not in America. Not in the world.

We stand with Military Religious Freedom Foundation and all people of good will. We will not give up our work to see that all people, everywhere, may be kept whole to live their lives by the inner lights of their conscience. We can do no less.

Elizabeth Sholes

Director of Public Policy



Dear MRFF,

It is good to know that you are one of the fine civil rights advocacy organizations out there with which we can initiate outreach activities. I appreciate the relationships that I have established with the Muslim communities in the Midwest and especially through Sheila Musaji with The American Muslim Network of St. Louis, Missouri. I know that Sheila is a good friend of yours and the Military Religious Freedom Foundation (MRFF). Sheila Musaji provides our office with information and materials on a regular basis. Matter of fact, she played an important role for Region VII DOJ/CRS when we instituted a training program focusing on Muslim, Arab-American and Sikhs. The training was geared toward law enforcement getting a better understanding of the cultures described. Establishing a good relationship with MRFF is welcomed as well.

CRS looks forward to working with MRFF in establishing a solid working relationship and its many military member clients. Sharing information, educational perspectives, and religious and racial conflicts, civil rights that impact a community is a concern of this agency.

William Whitcomb works out of Region VII that covers the states of Kansas, Missouri, Iowa and Nebraska.

Again, I refer you to our website which is [http:// www.justice.gov/crs](http://www.justice.gov/crs)

Thanks for the interest.

P.S. I heard that you are a 2010 Nobel Peace Prize nomination. Congratulations!!

U.S. Department of Justice, Community Relations Service



Mikey,

I have used your material in many of my columns for the Florida Jewish Journal. The Military Religious Freedom Foundation is a national treasure because it does what no other organization is doing. Keeping an eye on the continued separation of church in state in the military is crucial to the future of our country. Given your background and education you are the perfect person to be in charge. Thank you for bringing the mess at the Air Force Academy to light and for all your other work. I look forward to your South Florida appearance on November 15<sup>th</sup>. I hope to be with you.

Bruce

*Rabbi Bruce Warshal is Publisher Emeritus and columnist for the Jewish Journal.*

Dear Rabbi Bruce:

Thank you for your awareness and advocacy of the Military Religious Freedom Foundation. The Columbus Jewish Foundation, like you, is strongly supportive of Mikey Weinstein's efforts. It's lonely out there: most Jewish organizations, including ADL, appear to be oblivious to what MRFF is up against. Please keep up the good work.

Jackie Jacobs, Executive Director

Columbus Jewish Foundation

L'shana tova from

your Columbus Jewish

Foundation Family



Dear Mikey,

Religious freedom is in trouble in our nation. As a patriot and as a Baptist pastor, that disturbs me considerably.

I grew up in a small Christian fundamentalist church affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention. Integral to the historic Baptist tradition has been a strong commitment to separation of the institutions of religion and government. History documents the damage to religion that occurs when this basic principle is not observed.

Fortunately, for over 50 years I have had the privilege of serving in congregations and leading organizations that insisted on religious freedom. As president of Interfaith Alliance, every day I work on this issue with passion. From that work comes my conclusion that religious freedom is in trouble in our nation.

That is the backdrop against which I write to you now. From my perspective personally and as president of Interfaith Alliance I want to commend and endorse the Military Religious Freedom Foundation and its goals as well as applaud and support the tenacious activism with which you work to preserve our great Constitutional guarantee of religious freedom. Well aware that religious freedom is often compromised or even sometimes ignored in the United States armed forces, I am grateful to know that you and the MRFF are vigorously supporting and working for religious freedom for every person in the military—most of whom are Christians but all of whom, people of all faiths and people who hold to no faith, should be free for religion or from religion. The MRFF clearly has distinguished itself as a major civil rights organization that tirelessly defends the first freedom in the Constitution and positively contributes to the national security arena of the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps.

We at Interfaith Alliance know well the cost of speaking up and standing up for freedom for everybody in an environment in which many want freedom for themselves but not for those who differ with them. You individually and MRFF corporately have felt the hurts and bruises left by critics who fail to recognize that unless all are free none is free. We appreciate more than we can say your work among MRFF's 33,000-plus service member clients and their families and offer our encouragement to you, Mikey, your family, the MRFF staff, board and advisory board members.

Your courageous work for freedom and justice for all who serve in the military does not go without attention and appreciation. You have given hope and help to many who

thought they were alone. Know that we are in this work together for the good of our nation, the integrity of religion, and the benefit of our increasingly diverse society.

Sincerely,

Rev. Dr. C. Welton Gaddy

President

Interfaith Alliance



Dear Mr. Weinstein,

I would like to take time to thank you for your time and information that you were so generous in providing to the Joint Forces Chaplain Training event that took place at the Hyatt Regency Tamaya at Santo Domingo Pueblo, New Mexico on the 28<sup>th</sup> of July 2014. The vast majority of the Chaplains and Assistants that are assigned to the New Mexico Area of Operation for Air and Army National Guard as well as Active Army, New Mexico Military Institute and a representative from National Guard Bureau, were not sure what was to take place at this presentation. Needless to say they were pleasantly surprised.

Your message was timely in that our members had drawn conclusions as to your methodology and delivery style strictly from what it painted of you in the media. I only asked that they be open to you and what you are saying. To this end they unanimously agreed, they were stunned that you were not out to “get them”. The collegial discourse as well as the thought generation resulted in a new understanding of time, place and purpose. Does this mean that we will always be in agreement with you? Probably not; but, the awareness of potential pitfalls as well as the added opportunity to provide services to all members of the military were highlighted in the discussions that took place following your presentation.



Again, I feel that many of my colleagues would gain a lot of value by engaging with you in conversation, prior to adversarial confrontation. You helped launch the training to a level that it has not been before and to that end I thank you very much.

Respectfully,

QUENTIN D COLLINS

Chaplain, Lieutenant Colonel

NM ARNG

# Support

Dear MRFF,

I wish I had known about this organization when I was in the U.S. Navy. I was a Master at Arms (MP) and was deployed to (name withheld), and was harassed more by my ship mates for religious reasons than by the detainee's almost everyday. This was because I was not and am still not christian or any denomination there of. I am an American Indian and I believe in what my ancestors have believed in for more 10,000 years. And for this I was harassed.

Anyways Congratulations on the Nobel Nomination.

*You are the voice I wasn't allowed to use.*

(name withheld)



As a volunteer research staffer for the Military Religious Freedom Foundation since 2006 and a retired US Air Force Senior Master Sergeant, I've had the incredible honor to work closely with Mikey Weinstein in identifying and researching countless hundreds of violations of religious freedom within our military. While not a day goes by without discovering another new violation, the in your face overt nature of the violations has notably declined since MRFF has come on the scene. Not only has MRFF publicly exposed the worst of the violations to shame the military into immediate corrective action, but they have worked diligently with senior military leadership to slowly reverse the stifling religious freedom climate that has existed for decades.

As a basic training enlisted recruit in 1978, I experienced this climate first hand when I had the choice of either attending the Protestant Chapel every Sunday or doing military work details as de facto punishment for not attending. The enlisted recruits, officer

candidates, and academy cadets from all branches of the military are the most vulnerable when it comes to captive religious proselytizing as they're in a grueling civilian to military training regimen where even a hint of a suggestion from a non-commissioned officer, petty officer or commissioned officer is tantamount to a direct order. With the tacit or direct assistance of the military, highly aggressive and numerous well funded evangelical groups like Campus Crusade for Christ and Gideons spare no effort or expense to target these captive young people for conversion, and they have no tolerance for respect for other religions including Catholic & Christian denominations that don't meet their narrow theological & political definition of Christianity.

I firmly believe that MRFF is the only organization of it's type that has the capability to reverse the military's unconstitutional preference and persistent favoritism towards evangelicalism, and ensure that our lowest ranking troops and up have true freedom of religion and freedom FROM religion. Positive changes in the religious military culture such as the installation of a pagan alter at the US Air Force Academy to accommodate Wiccans would certainly not have happened without the efforts of the MRFF. Sadly, the later desecration of the worship site by intolerant evangelicals means there is much work yet to be done and MRFF must continue to prove it is up to the challenge of making a real difference.

(name withheld)



Aloha,

I happened to catch a portion of Michael Weinstein's interview with Dan Rather. I was unable to watch the entire program but fortunately have a DVR so was able to record it to view later.

As a United Methodist Clergyman I am well aware of some of the tactics of the fundamentalist groups in their aggressive attempts to “win souls for Jesus Christ.” I find that most of them are driven by hate and intolerance. I feel that their homophobia is simply the tip of the iceberg of their agenda. I resent the fact that this sort of hate mongering is going on in the US military which is funded by the tax dollars of ALL Americans. I have heard these fundamentalists referring to making the US a “Christian Nation” and it scares the hell out of me!!

The only thing that scares me more that a fundamentalist Muslim is a fundamentalist Christian!!

Please know that I support you in you efforts and wish you every success.

Sincerely,

Rev. J.E.B.



Dear Mr. Weinstein,

I am a Navy Veteran who served eight years of active duty, enlisting in 1966, at the age of 17. Although I was by then already a non-theist, I had always taken pride in the fact that my government, as exemplified by the military, could accurately be viewed as guardian of that noble principle upon which this country was founded, the freedom of – and freedom from – religion.

Not once, during my tenure in the military, was I ever subjected to religious coercion by my superiors, nor was my religion – or lack thereof – even considered an appropriate topic of scrutiny, let alone derision. It is therefore with the deepest shame as an American, and the deepest outrage as a veteran, that I find it necessary to offer my support to you and to your organization in defense of one of the most indispensable elements of liberty, the freedom of the mind. In the intervening years since leaving the Navy, it has

increasingly become apparent to me that the greatest threat to our democracy comes, not from any enemy outside our borders, but from our own pious flag-waving countrymen, who have been poisoned by the same impulse that has inspired all tyrannies throughout the long and torturous pages of human history.

As you know, the world seems to have no shortage of 'heroes' these days, and I won't presume to defrock anyone from that exalted plane to which they may have aspired, be he a sports star, religious leader, or self-anointed politician. But, of one thing I am certain: You, Mr. Weinstein, are truly a hero.

Please accept my deepest gratitude for all you have done and are doing on behalf of the ideals that prompted us both to proudly wear the uniform in the first place.

Sincerely yours,

D.B.



Mikey,

I just read Jeff Sharlett's article in the May issue of Harper's. It moved me to write to you, especially since the article mentioned that you've received a lot of hate mail. As a Christian minister, I want to thank you for your work. I am disgusted by the way "Christianity" is being promoted -and twisted- in the military and at how top brass are using their positions to gain a spotlight in certain church circles. I find militaristic Christianity repugnant.

To turn military service into a means of missionary activity abuses both faith and the purpose of the military. Any "witness" they offer is deeply tainted. I can share neither the methods nor the message of those who seem so willing to blend and blur God and America, Christianity and nationalism.

Your focus is insuring religious freedom in the military and maintaining the wall of separation between church/religion and state. Mine is maintaining the integrity of the life and message of the church. I, too, believe in a wall of separation but the constitution is of secondary importance to me. My faith itself demands such a separation for without it the church- and other religious organizations- end up getting subverted by the interests, aims and identity of the state. Those evangelicals in the military who so eagerly seek to "Christianize" the armed services end up Americanizing and to a significant extent de-Christianizing the church.

I wish you the very best in your work. Neither the church nor America needs missionaries in military uniform.

(name withheld)



Dear Mr. Weinstein:

I just read the article "No Dominion: The Lonely, Dangerous Fight Against Christian Supremacists Inside the Armed Forces" on the Truthout website. I have to admit that I feel extremely angry and disgusted with those un-American Christian fundamentalists who seem to have way too much power and influence in our Armed Services. After reading about what you and your boys went through for simply being Jewish is nauseating. These Christian Dominionists have been and continue to subvert the Enlightenment values our nation was founded upon with their illegal religious proselytizing. Such zealotry has no place in our Armed Services which were established to defend and protect the Constitution and Bill of Rights for every American citizen. I hope that you and the MRFF continue this important struggle for the secular rule of law against these forces of dogmatic enslavement. Our strength as a nation is found in our diversity and in our freedom of conscience. These values make us an exceptional nation in a world of dogmatic religious conflict and you and the MRFF are fighting to preserve and protect these uniquely

American values. So I want to thank you, your family and the MRFF for doing what is necessary to uphold and protect the Constitution and Bill of Rights within our military and for our whole nation. Your service to our nation is beyond measure and should be supported by every patriotic citizen who values freedom and justice.

May you have continued success in this epic battle for America's values & ideals,

(name withheld)

The essence of the liberal outlook lies not in what opinions are held but in how they are held: instead of being held dogmatically, they are held tentatively, and with a consciousness that new evidence may at any moment lead to their abandonment. This is the way opinions are held in science, as opposed to the way in which they are held in theology.

-- Bertrand Russell, Unpopular Essays, "Philosophy and Politics" (1950), p. 149



Dear Mr. Weinstein and all MRFF staff and members,

I am writing on this beautiful day in the Colorado sunshine to thank you for your service. As I pay my respects to my father and all veterans, I wanted to take a moment for this very important cause.

What a great opportunity to send my donation. I have finally rejoined the workforce after a difficult year. I am following through with my promise to donate. As my life gets back on track I will continue my support of all you do. It is very important to me.

Thank you for taking on such a monumental task to confront the evil within our own military and government. It is sad that you have this fight, so many resources spent on

this. Like me, I am confident that all of you have issues that affect you personally. You would rather see money, time and emotion dedicated to taking those issues in a better direction.

You are doing it right. These military problems need to be addressed and we are fortunate to have you. I am proud to be there in your support.

I am sending a smile to all of you!

(name withheld)

Littleton, co



Dear Mikey:

On my return return flight yesterday I sat behind a Muslim mother in a burka with her four adorable children ranging in age from about two to seven, two boys and two girls. The oldest boy helped the mother fasten the seat belt of the little ones. They were some of the most polite, well dressed and behaved children you'd ever find on a plane. The little girl of about five couldn't resist a game of peek-a-boo with me looking back between the space in the seats.

My epiphany (figure of speech there) that MRFF had arrived came at about 32000 feet: Right before my eyes was the very reason it would have been evil and wicked for Franklin Graham to lead the country of this young mother and her precious children in a National Day of Prayer.

I was thrilled all the way back to my flight destination (LA) over MRFF's most recent monumental achievement in getting the Pentagon to "disinvite" Graham from speaking there on its National Day of Prayer event..

(name withheld)





Over the last three years I have followed the work of Mikey Weinstein and the Military Religious Freedom Foundation, first with skepticism, then with gratitude. What sold me was the voices of soldiers themselves – some awkward, some hesitant, some pouring out torrents of frustration at the indignities they experience from officers and chaplains who see themselves as missionaries on the public tab.

Most of the stories I have read or heard are from moderate Christians who are told their Christianity isn't real. Others come from agnostics, former Christians, and other religious minorities like Muslims or Jews who are asked to comply with practices that actually violate their own spirituality. In my experience, Mikey and the Foundation have a bulldog passion for supporting soldiers who seek only to practice their own deepest values in dignity—free from coercion and proselytizing. The fight is against religious bullying, pure and simple.

(name withheld)

Psychologist



The military's most serious problem is not political, but "religious". Fanatic Fundamentalists have infiltrated the military, from the Air Force and other Academies to senior serving officers and non-coms, even those stationed in war theatres. These renegade officers and non-coms force their version of Christianity on soldiers who are helpless to protest . If they dare ask to be excused from prayer meetings or Bible sessions, they risk -- and often receive -- punishment and retribution. This sordid reality permeated the past Administration, which itself thought along similar lines. It is urgent that the new Commander-in-Chief issue strict orders that proseletizing in the military is FORBIDDEN, and violators will be punished.

One organization is having some impact: Mikey Weinstein's "Military Religious Freedom Foundation" receives hundreds of anguished letters, mostly from Christians, begging for help to protect themselves from uninvited Fundamentalist persecution. MRFF deserves our support and respect. The military MUST remain free of religious ideologies!



Mikey,

I wanted to reach out to you and thank you for the advocacy that you, Chris Rodda and Military Religious Freedom Foundation engage in. The critical work that MRFF does for our brave men and women in the Armed Forces -- irrespective of faith (or none at all) cannot be emphasized enough.

I speak to you as a proud American and a practicing Muslim. I am also the son of Jewish father and a Catholic Christian mother. Religious freedom, tolerance and pluralism are not just lofty concepts for me -- it's deeply personal. I also have family members and colleagues who are Muslim Americans and have served honorably for decades to defend our nation.

MRFF is important because it fights everyday to ensure that people of all religious orientations (or none at all), including Muslim Americans, can serve our nation with the dignity and honor so many other Americans aspire to do everyday. Several thousand Muslims soldiers serve proudly, honorably and effectively in our armed forces everyday as our top soldiers, analysts, translators and more. Unfortunately the sad reality is that after 9/11, because of pernicious fears, misperceptions and dangerously persistent innuendos about Muslim Americans these contributions are largely overlooked.

During yesterday's Senate hearing on Muslim American civil rights, held by Sen. Durbin, a lot of the stories about Muslim American contributions to our nation were about individuals serving in our armed services. The stories were extremely compelling and personally moved me, as they did for many other people attending and participating in the hearing.

At the same time, I could not help but think of the persistent uphill battles many of these very same service members must be facing on account of their faith. Like Mikey and others at MRFF, I have personally heard heart-wrenching stories directly from our Muslim American service members of the discrimination they face.

And that's why MRFF is so important -- it fights to ensure that the tight-knit brother and sisterhood we call the United States military is open and welcoming to Muslim Americans. With MRFF in their corner, Muslim Americans can also ensure they are treated equally as any other American soldier proudly serving our nation. They also help to maintain the necessary unit cohesion and morale that's so important to effectiveness on the battlefield. In that regard MRFF does our nation a double service by protecting our nation's values and its military readiness.

I highly encourage our military service members, including our Muslim military men and women, to learn more about MRFF and support the great work they do. They are an invaluable asset to our soldiers and our nation.

Thanks,

Government and Policy Analyst  
Muslim Public Affairs Council



Sir and Ma'am:

First, allow me to congratulate you for your courage and the battle you wage. I read and re-read the recent TruthOut.org article and immediately felt relieved that you are tilting at windmills that are very scary monsters, indeed. Thank you.

As a disabled Army veteran who also worked as an advocate for veterans as the associate EX-POW Coordinator and rating specialist for the VA Regional Office in

Louisville, KY, it does my heart good knowing there are voices of reason and sanity working to support troops as well as protect the Constitution.

In the past 10-20 years I have often asked former Army buddies and friends "just when did my country lose its collective mind?" No one seemed to notice or care that some of the messengers were closer to the Taliban than most moderate Muslims. That alone scares me, and then to hear the former Governor of Alaska describe her son's deployment to Iraq as a "member of Christ's Army" sent shivers down my spine.

I didn't serve 2 years on the Korean DMZ and destroying my lower spine by jumping out of helicopters for any "One" God; conversely, I did it to protect Everyone's choice of religious expression (or not ). That's how I have always understood our civic duty to apply our jurisprudence, one's individual conscience notwithstanding.

I have set up a small, recurring payment to help fund your efforts and wish we could afford more; but, having 2 children still at home and my medical conditions not having any chance of improving due to the extent and severity of the damage to my spines, this'll have to do for now.

Good luck in your battles, our country needs you more than it knows.

With Deepest Respect,

(name withheld)



Hi Mikey,

I am a friend of Casey's and his former USAFA classmate. You took us out to dinner our freshman year after Jewish services. I have been following your work closely over the years and finally asked Casey for your email to personally thank you.

Thank you for being a voice for so many men and woman in the armed forces who are unable to speak out. The military is a better place today because of your actions and now many have found the courage to stand for what they believe in. Last year, after reading one of your letters I looked at my wife and said "I am going to law school." Your writing, use of the legal system, and the global response to your words was incredible. I am happy to let you know that as a result of this inspiration I was recently admitted to Berkeley Law and will be starting in August.

Thank you for the personal inspiration that helped shape my future and thank you for all the work you are doing which touches so many.

Please let me know if I can ever be of service.

By the way, Rabbi Rachlis in Irvine CA often mentions the great work you are doing. I joined his synagogue a bit after you spoke there.

With Gratitude,  
(name withheld)

What an Exciting time to be Alive!



Mr. Weinstein:

You do not know me but please know that your action of standing up against religious and ethnic intolerance, no matter how well disguised and no matter how popular with the establishment, is a source of encouragement to all Americans, especially for those of us who are on the receiving end of this type of hateful behavior. America is a beautiful construct of some very enlightened human beings who were our founding fathers, but those who stand for its ideals of religious tolerance and understanding, are the true sons of

those founding fathers. Thank you again Sir. You deserve our respect, admiration and above all our support.

(name withheld)



*The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the US government or the Department of Defense.*

Mr. Weinstein and MRFF, first and foremost, I want to sincerely thank you for fighting so hard for so many who are simply not able to voice their objections, without facing career-ending direct and indirect reprisal, to unconstitutional religious violations in the United States military. This is not a complaint about abuses I've faced throughout my career as a fighter pilot in the Air Force. I've had a great career with many amazing memories and friendships. However, there is one thing that has always been a worrisome frustration, year after year, for a non-religious officer raised in the Catholic faith, like myself. Proselytizing at public and official military events is accepted and sometimes even encouraged.

In the military, it's well known that a Christian majority dominates the ranks, especially in the fighter world. That's to be expected in an organization that was founded to drive forth US interests in the name of American Exceptionalism. When Europeans arrived to the "New" World, they believed that they were on a sanctified mission to bring, impose upon, and transform the untamed lands with Christianity. As Christians, they felt themselves to be exceptional, and it was their duty to enlighten others to this preeminent human status. This missionary branch of exceptionalism didn't stop with the eastern seaboard of America. God's hand was driving force in America's expansion westward as Manifest Destiny arose in the 17th century. Massachusetts Congressman Francis Bylies expressed the idea of manifest in 1823:

“To diffuse the arts of life, the light of science, and the blessings of the Gospel over a wilderness, is no violation of the laws of God; it is no invasion of the rights of man to occupy a territory over which the savage roams, but which he never cultivates.... The stream of bounty which perpetually flows from the throne of the Almighty ought not to be obstructed in its course.”

Thank goodness people don't still think this way! Or do they? The idea of American Exceptionalism is more popular than ever. Every political speech in America ends with, “God bless the United States of America!” Patriots resonate, “God bless the troops!” Political leaders are disparaged if they speak with reason about America's place in the international community. Recently, former House Speaker Newt Gingrich criticized the president for working with other international powers to solve the crisis in Libya. He said,

"The United States doesn't need anybody's permission-. We don't need to have NATO, who frankly, won't bring much to the fight. We don't need to have the United Nations."

Of course we don't. Not if the divine hand of God drives us! It is dangerous to have this missionary mindset of American Exceptionalism in the leadership of government, and even more so in our military.

When I took my oath of office, I swore to defend the US constitution against all enemies foreign and domestic. One can reasonably argue that parts of this constitution were founded on Christian principles. However, it was designed so that the people were subordinate to the *principles*, and not the religion itself. The First Amendment ensures that no law is made establishing or prohibiting the free exercise of a religion. In an organization where strategic decisions are made everyday, involving large-scale lethal force, the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment must outweigh the Free Exercise Clause.

In nearly a decade of service to the military, I have witnessed religion, specifically Christianity, take its place in the agenda of official events. I have had to stand uncomfortably at change of command ceremonies, graduations, and official dinners to

listen to the Chaplain preach about Jesus and quote from the New Testament. For three months in Afghanistan, I watched AFN T.V. while I ate my food during all the meals. On an adjacent big screen was a slide show of bible study advertisements, including pictures of the New Testament and the words "Answers Inside" pointing towards the book. In mandatory commander briefs in Afghanistan, I sat through over 25 sessions of "Words from the Chaplain" where I was told how turning to Jesus and following the word of the Bible would bring happiness to my life. How tempted I was to stand up and say to the commander, sir, hold on; isn't this proselytizing and a blatant breach of the Establishment Clause?

So, why didn't I? In the military, as in American politics, there is a certain fear established in the culture. It is the fear of retribution and it is the fear of feeling shame for the disrespect shown towards religious authorities. I could imagine fifty faces turning toward me in the room with burning eyes and their voices in unison: *Even though you may have a point, how DARE you disrespect the Chaplain. The Chaplain!* When I mention this to the few friends who allow me to speak my mind, they ask me why it's such a big deal to me. Why does it bother you so much? I ask them to imagine me on the briefing stage, with my microphone in hand, telling the military staff that true morality and happiness can only be found through the acceptance of Lord Brahma, the creator. Or, how would they feel if they were required to stand in "prayer" as the Chaplain gave a sermon on the fact that there is no god?

Although I don't fully agree with it, I understand why taxpayer dollars pay Chaplains to be military officers. The military takes its troops far from home and feels responsible in accommodating their religious needs (although Chaplains are allowed to refuse certain rites to believers who don't share their own conviction). What I find so hard to understand, time and time again, is why Chaplains can't keep their personal faith out of the official military arena. Is it that hard to share a set of inspiring, secular thoughts that everyone can enjoy and gain a feeling of wellbeing from? Great leaders do it all the time. The separation between church and people that make things break needs to be well defined and fully enforced.

The bottom line is that I'm a fighter pilot in a predominantly Christian community,



and I accept that, just as I accept being an American in a predominantly Christian America. What I don't accept is defending the Constitution and our nation through the potential lethal force of a Christian *military*. That is dangerous. Proselytizing at official functions and posting "billboards" advocating one religion over another in the military is wrong. Unfortunately, it is still accepted and encouraged. This is, after all, an organization where "spiritual strength is an integral part of leadership." God bless our troops, and God bless the United States of America. Do I believe that God drives American lethality with his guiding hand? Of course I don't. But, to say otherwise would be political suicide in this military.

(name, rank, USAF unit and military installation in Afghanistan withheld)



Dear national leaders and friends,

At the age of 80, my time on earth is limited and so I feel an urgent need to share what is in my heart about the frightening and historically similar conditions in today's U.S. Military to those I had to live through during the Holocaust. These ominous trends were brought to my attention by Mikey Weinstein and the Military Religious Freedom Foundation (MRFF). I applaud Mikey's tenacity and bravery in his efforts to expose the stealthy fundamentalist takeover attempt of our armed forces, a strategy all too reminiscent of what brought the end of my family's life in pre-war Poland. If there is one gift I can hope to leave my three daughters and five grandchildren, it is that their father and grandfather, in joining forces with MRFF, did his part in standing up to this clear and present danger...a danger which the greater population sadly seems all too willing to ignore. My words are motivated not only by a lifelong anger towards the perpetrators who annihilated my family

and my people, but also towards those who knowingly sat by and watched the horrors of the Holocaust unfurl and did nothing to stop them. It is my determined hope that when you help MRFF's cause, neither my children nor grandchildren will ever have to experience the things I went through during my youth in the Nazi death and concentration camps.

America is different from other nations thanks to our magnificent Constitution, which specifically prohibits any sort of "religious test" for all Federal offices, and that most certainly includes the military! Our founders understood the need for a distinct separation between Church and State because of the things they had witnessed in Europe and the new American colonies. As James Madison so often and eloquently wrote, it is precisely the manifest separation of Church and State that strengthens our citizens' most fundamental religious rights. In the America to which I so gratefully immigrated, all religions were allowed to flourish and NONE were permitted to be specifically, or even indirectly, favored or "recommended by the state." Personally, I have lived through the Inferno that sprang up in a country that rejected such separation. My memories of the Holocaust remain all too vivid in my mind. The dark red and black columns of flame and smoke that I saw upon my night-time arrival at Auschwitz-Birkenau haunt my dreams even with the stench of burning human flesh included. I remember not saying goodbye to my mother upon hearing the SS and the Kapos, dogs at their side, command, "Men right! Women left!" My father had previously explained to me that any woman with a child was as good as dead in Auschwitz. I remember not being given a tattoo because, by the summer of 1944, the Nazis no longer deemed it economically worth the ink; the average life expectancy there being but two weeks by then.

Prior to Auschwitz I spent 3 1/2 years in the Łódź ghetto, actually an urban concentration-camp. In less than three years the Jewish population there went from approximately 200,000 to no more than 30,000 by the time the ghetto was being "liquidated" in June 1944. My family and I were among the last to give up our hiding place on the edges of the ghetto when we surrendered to be transported to Auschwitz in early August 1944.

Regardless of the horrors of Auschwitz and other concentration camps that I lived through, I still consider the Lodz Ghetto to have been the more emotionally difficult one to live through. In the ghetto, we still lived in family units, visited relatives and friends, and continued some social interactions with acquaintances, even though we existed on 600 calories a day if we were lucky. Deaths from tuberculosis, dysentery and typhus were daily occurrences as were frequent, random German military shootings in the streets. Mothers were forced to watch their children die of starvation and spouses watched each other starve. I remember seeing the bodies of some of my school friends lying still on the sidewalk. But at least in the ghetto, I could still feel. At least here, tears still ran down our faces, we cried for our loved ones and felt sorrow for strangers. Such personal grief disappeared completely in the concentration camps.

After surviving Auschwitz-Birkenau for almost 6 weeks (three average life expectancies for there!) my father, my brother, and I managed to find our way onto a transport to the "work camps in Germany," a statistical miracle, since the Birkenau regulations were that no one under the age of fifteen was to leave alive. The next punishment we suffered for being born of the 'wrong' religion consisted of stays in seven Dachau sub-camps (where in one, Riederloh, my father was beaten to death with a shovel by the camp's commandant in January, 1945). In the main Dachau-1 camp I narrowly escaped death from becoming a guinea pig for malaria experiments.

After one unsuccessful escape attempt, my brother and I finally managed to escape in mid-April 1945 from Dachau-2 (Karlsfeld), were "captured" by an American infantry patrol and taken to their battalion field headquarters. There a Polish-speaking sergeant from Chicago explained our origins to the GIs and we were "issued" fatigue uniforms, making of us instant micro GIs, or mascots of U.S. Army. My brother came to United States in early 1946 while I remained a U.S. Army mascot and civilian employee until the spring of 1947. I had had a belly full of Europe by then and stowed away successfully from Cherbourg, France, on a freighter headed for New York. After spending six months on Ellis Island, I was eventually released and "legalized" by an Act of the United States Congress "in recognition of my services to the U.S. Army in Europe." After President

Truman signed this Act, I finally became a free man in America. I volunteered for United States Air Force one year later, spending about four years in the service during the Korean Conflict. After my honorable discharge I embarked to pursue the American Dream. I am now retired after a career in several private industry firms, extended civil service with NOAA and eventually owning my own company in Boulder, Colorado. It should be clear to all who read this why I love America. The Plywacki family of Poland is no more. Of the 200 members of my extended family only four survived the de-Judaizing German rule in Poland. Of those four, only my brother William and I remain alive. The other survivors were two maiden aunts who eluded the Germans in Warsaw with falsified "Aryan" (i.e. Christian) identity papers. They were ultimately denounced to the Gestapo for \$20 by a bounty-hunter for hidden Jews. Somehow they managed to survive many months of torture and died in Poland after the war by 1963.

Like every society, the United States has its own extreme fundamentalists and bigots, just as some dogs have fleas. Most frighteningly, there has been a concerted drive to infiltrate the military by these very fundamentalists who believe in the superiority of their very dangerous brand of Christianity. It is a brand that, in its evangelism, telegraphs a Crusader agenda abroad while attempting to coerce the rank and file to adhere literally to their Bible. Just as in caring for your pet you would immediately deal with the fleas, so too must we, as a society, stand firmly behind the Constitution in ferreting out those who wish to eradicate the wall of separation between Church and State.

If my words have convinced even one of you to stand up and take note, then please give Mr. Weinstein all the financial support you can, become his advocate with friends, neighbors and most important of all, the media, then perhaps what I had to endure in my youth will not have been in vain. I, who have seen the takeover of a country, and have seen humans go mad with hatred and bloodlust, can only hope that Americans will awaken to this danger and put an end to the usurpation of power in our military by today's Christian fundamentalist fanatics who want to turn it into a Christian Army and therefore their own tool. It matters not if those who would take over our military call themselves

Christian, Jew, Muslim, or Devil worshipers; what matters is that a democratic society cannot possibly hold onto its freedoms under the guns of a militarized theocracy.

In conclusion, I cannot urge strongly enough- in fact I beg you- to help the Military Religious Freedom Foundation to defeat the onslaught of fundamentalist Christian theocratization of the Armed Forces of the United States. If things continue to proceed as now, our military will all too easily begin its descent into the American equivalent of the brown-shirted SA. History has shown all too consistently the extreme danger that religious militarism imposes upon secular democratic societies when those societies cede their exclusive right to bear arms and enforce the law without racial or religious prejudices. This time, please, let's not wait until it's too late.

Most sincerely yours,

Walter Plywaski, previously Wladyslaw Plywacki

Formerly of Lodz ghetto, Auschwitz and Dachau



Mikey . . .

My name is Dave Nolte and, to begin, I want to thank you and the Military Religious Freedom Foundation for the incredible civil rights activism you do in support of so many thousands of our wonderful United States military troops. I'm a 1967 graduate of the University of Iowa ROTC program, a 1971 (M.Div) graduate of Yale University's Divinity School, a 1985 honor graduate of the US Army Command and General Staff College (Ft. Leavenworth), and a Chaplain (COL) US Army (Retired) who has only recently become aware of the MRFF and its excellent, important work.

I was stationed in Germany in the 1980's when two Harvard law students challenged the constitutionality of the Army Chaplaincy. This challenge was ultimately not successful thanks, in part, to the highly effective efforts of Rabbi and lawyer Israel Drazin . . . an Army Reservist who was called back to active duty by the Chief of Chaplains to participate in the Chaplaincy's defense. Central to that defense was the underlying

principle that the primary legal reason for the existence of military chaplains and chaplaincy is to assist commanders in ensuring every service member's First Amendment rights to free exercise of religion, as well as freedom from the coercion of any form of governmental "establishment" of religion.

Chaplain Drazin completed his active duty as a Brigadier General, contributing one more essential service to the chaplaincy — special Chaplain schools outlining for all Army chaplains the implications of this court case for their shared ministries. In my case, this experience left me with a deep and abiding concern for our precious First Amendment protections as applied to religious and spiritual matters . . . understanding that unless everyone is free, no one can be truly free.

Exploring your web site, I've been shocked to see that the lessons taught by Chaplain Drazin have been, in recent years, so widely neglected. I fear that some of my "brothers and sisters in the Lord", in their understandable enthusiasm for their own particular visions of faith and faithfulness, are inadvertently supporting and encouraging a "de facto" Theocracy in our Armed Services — in violation of those very principles of religious liberty which are so intrinsic to the Constitution which every service member is pledged to support and defend, if necessary to the death.

Please receive this note as a word of encouragement, and please count on my prayerful and active support of the MRFF mission.

Sincerely,

David M. Nolte

Albuquerque, NM



Mr. Weinstein,

I met you when you spoke a month or so ago at Boston College. As Curtis' classmate at AFA, I am very interested in what you are doing with MRFF. I was appreciative to hear your perspective; thank you for coming all the way to Boston to

speak! I am glad to know MRFF is fighting to ensure the Constitutional rights of our service members are upheld and defended.

Your book is powerful; I could hardly put it down. I was shocked and grieved to read of all abuse and turmoil you endured at AFA during your tenure there. I am very sorry you were subjected to such cruelty.

As I understand it, you and your family are threatened even now. I hope you will strengthened to endure and protected from any harm.

It takes a lot of courage to share your experiences in the way you have. I respect that and hope that your testimony and current work will make a positive difference going forward.

Thank you for your dedication to upholding our Constitutional rights – keep fighting the good fight.

Sincerely,

(name withheld)



To: Mr. Weinstein and the Military Religious Freedom Foundation (MRFF),

I am the person who called you out of the blue very recently to thank you for what you and the MRFF do to protect religious freedom of conscience rights in the United States Navy (and all of DoD for that matter as well). I know about the MRFF's powerful impact in the Navy the best; firsthand. I am an active duty Admiral in the U.S. Navy with, shall we say, more than one star. I am a 1970's era graduate of the United States Naval Academy at Annapolis and currently command a large "Naval entity" with multiple thousands of U.S. Navy and U.S. Marine Corps military and civilian personnel. I won't get anymore specific than that at this time. I am also a "closet MRFF supporter" and have been for quite a while. In fact, I've been a stealth MRFF fan ever since I was awestruck as to how the MRFF courageously stood up very publicly to the then Superintendent of my alma mater, the U.S. Naval Academy. This event happened a few years ago because that

particular Admiral would not, himself, stand up to the Christian religious zealots there who demanded that they be allowed to dip the American flag “to the altar of our Lord and Savior” at their evangelical Sunday morning church services at the Naval Academy chapel. I might add that I, myself, like most of the MRFF’s clients happen to be of the Christian faith.

I am also a donor to the MRFF. However, I donate through a “safe” third party to avoid any possibility of anyone knowing how much I support the MRFF. That innocuous third party, of course, gets the tax deduction, not me, but I get the deep satisfaction of knowing that I’m aiding the only organization that understands the dire consequences of what is happening in the U.S. armed forces of today. Mr. Weinstein is completely right when he describes the church-state wall destruction in the DoD as a national security threat of the highest order. Our Constitution is being defiled in the Navy and Marine Corps by religious bigotry and from extremists within my own faith tradition; Christianity. I wish I could “come out” with my strong support of the MRFF. Unfortunately, if I did so my naval career would be over and, thus, my effectiveness to support the MRFF from within the “Navy Body Politic” would also be at an abrupt end. I may not be proud of my clandestine, versus overt, MRFF admiration and support, but I have laboriously reconciled within myself that, for now, even unseen support is better than no support at all for the MRFF. Please know that I have personally advised a number of military and civilian Naval and Marine Corps personnel over the years to seek direct aid, counsel and intervention from the MRFF and that the MRFF has never failed to come through for any of them. Many of those I have sent to the MRFF have been under my own command. Think about that for a moment but do not think too long. Yes, that great irony is just a small example of how bad things are in today’s Navy and Marine Corps when it comes to Christian religious zealotry and proselytization. A few days ago, an acquaintance who is a senior ranking, active duty U.S. Army officer called me shortly after listening to Mr. Weinstein speak at the Army War College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. He told me that Mr. Weinstein very forcefully, effectively and colorfully (is there any other way for him?) made his and the MRFF’s case in front of that initially skeptical audience of several hundred people. He asked me if I thought that



Mr. Weinstein's message was "for real"? This senior Army officer did not know then, and still does not know, about my long history of MRFF support. I answered his question with a question. I asked him if he'd ever reviewed the MRFF website. He told me that he had not and I suggested that he do so. Half an hour before I called Mr. Weinstein, as mentioned above, that same senior Army officer called me back. He told me that after closely reviewing the MRFF website, it was now clear to him that Mr. Weinstein's message was not only "real" but vividly described a very clear and present danger to our country. Now, given his own very senior rank and many years of current Army active duty service, the questions of how he could not already be well aware of this situation and what he is actually prepared to do about it are ones only he can answer. I did not ask him about those important matters, though perhaps I should have. But it was that telephone exchange that prompted me to finally call Mr. Weinstein and, for the first time, offer my personal thanks for what ONLY he and the MRFF organization provide for our armed forces members who cannot provide for themselves when confronting unconstitutional religious zealotry and bias from their superiors; even if they are an Admiral in the United States Navy like me.

(name, exact rank, military unit/command and military installation withheld)



Mikey Weinstein:

Thank you for your presentation at the Army War College. Particularly helpful and, frankly, surprising to me was your distinction between evangelicals and fundamentalists. So many people fail to recognize the distinctions and nuances and, e.g., the huge range within Protestant Christianity.

I'm ordained in the same denomination as your fellow panelist, Chaplain Kenneth Bush. Both he and I are members of a chaplain endorsing agency. We lamented the departure of certain groups (such as some you described) that left NCMAF (National Conference on Ministry to the Armed Forces, the endorsing agencies' organization) and

went off and formed their own organization, a competing one in effect, that they think will better serve their purposes.

On the other hand, our endorsing commission does have to intervene at times when one of our chaplains experiences discrimination by very liberal Protestant chaplain supervisors, e.g., who object to any expression (even somewhat privately) of opposition to ending Don't Ask, Don't Tell, or to directives to hold joint "general Protestant" services (especially if sacraments are involved) with Mormons or Christian Science chaplains and so on.

Anyway, I've heard about some of your experiences at the Air Force Academy. I regret what happened, but view the perpetrators more as naïve, thoughtless, lacking self-reflection, etc. than as cunning, intentionally callous, or whatever. I felt like saying to you: "But Mr. Weinstein, they mean well. They just don't understand. Give them a break!"

Now I see you as less "out to get people" than I'd imagined, and I'm glad for that. I deeply regret the false statements about your organization and the threats against you personally.

I served as a Pennsylvania Army National Guard chaplain for 22 years. I did everything I could to help the non-Protestants, including any number of practicing Jews. They were very appreciative. Rabbi Mark Shook here in St. Louis is a fellow volunteer police chaplain and personal friend, now just retired as senior rabbi at Temple Israel, but still a chaplain, occasional public radio guest commentator, and adjunct instructor for Judaism courses at Saint Louis University.

(name withheld)



Hi Mikey,

As I get ready to finish a four-year teaching tour at USAFA, I wanted to share some perspectives with you. I am a (1990's decade) USAFA grad who teaches (USAF Academy

Faculty academic disciplines withheld) here. My family (wife and age-withheld girl) are Catholic.

I was very happy to have finally met you during the 2010 NCLS conference where you literally “rocked the house” when you spoke to a standing room only crowd. I was here as a cadet from 199X to 199X, and my last two years were under General Gamble’s watch as Commandant. As a new third class cadet, I was told by my AOC and his cadet cronies from the New Life Church that I “could not be saved” for being Catholic. When this AOC introduced himself for the first time to the entire cadet squadron, he talked about his happy party life as a an FB-111 crew member until “he became a Christian”. Between myself having thick skin and being too busy trying to survive the workload, I did not make much of it. Before I was told of my terrible future in Hades if I did not join them, I innocently attended Bible Studies thinking they wanted to share a positive Christian message, but I soon found out the passages they were sharing were stressing the idea of not having other idols (i.e. my crucifix, the Virgin Mary, etc.) I saw them more as pests and was not mature enough to understand the seriousness of the problem. If they felt like that about other Christians, I never thought how much more worse it could be for Jews, Muslims, Atheists, etc. During the lead-up to Recognition Training in 1992, one of our Muslim cadets, who was on exchange from Pakistan went through very tough all-day without eating or drinking during the daylight hours because this period coincided with Ramadan. The same AOC made an off-handed remark along the lines of “these crazy third-rate religions”, essentially ridiculing this cadet’s spirit.

I became more sensitized to the issue, as I ran into obnoxious evangelicals during every assignment, the worse was watching U.S. Army Lt General Benjamin Mixon pushing his faith on us during a retirement ceremony at U.S. Southern Command in Miami in 2003. When you and your courageous sons and daughter-in-law came forward a few years ago, I finally realized the seriousness. I read all about it in your book, “With God on Our Side” and this only reinforced my outrage as I had personally observed and endured many of the same terrible things your sons and daughter-in-law experienced. In 200X I deployed to Ali Al Salem Air Base from May to November. I overlapped with the 386th Air Expeditionary

Wing Commander, Mark Hale (also an AOC during my time at USAFA) during three months from May to July. He proudly identified as a “Christian Warrior”, but he never once pushed his faith on me. My roommate was a his Executive Officer, who proudly shared with me how happy he was that Colonel Hale identified him as a Christian brother, and often had long chats with him about their faith. He also showed me some Christian memorabilia the Colonel had personally given him before departure. I think it was a very propagandistic book by an author who had served in the military. My time in the desert made me realize how some of these fundamentalists perverted the tragedy of 9/11 by turning it into a message of war between their idea of Christianity versus the Muslim world. At the same time I was becoming aware of the “Passion of the Christ” impact on your sons and daughter-in-law, and other disgusting things that were happening here at USAFA.

In 200X I found out I was coming here to teach, something that I had set as a personal goal, and moved in June 200X. I arrived with a guarded attitude, but at the same time, I did not want to assume everyone here was going to cause trouble with unsolicited proselytizing. During the new faculty orientation, they barely touched on the history of problems here and made very vague statements about religious respect. Some of my fellow new faculty were familiar with the past and found it outrageous that they could not share their faith with others. I asked one of them why it bothered her so much, and she said it was her duty to share the gospel with everyone. She also invited my wife, a civilian, for a female gathering, and I interpreted it as a friendly gesture. My wife later told me that the gathering was Bible Study, and they even gave her a workbook of materials that would prepare her to be a “Christian.” My wife is tough and she held her tongue, but she later shared her outrage with me. This faculty member was never friendly to us again after my wife politely declined other invitations. My poor wife has patiently endured unsolicited critiques of her medallion of the Virgin of Guadalupe from some of our “friendly” locals, but I know this falls outside the scope of the problems in the military. I just want to make the point that the overall mentality in Colorado Springs has not only damaged USAFA, but it can take a huge toll on dependents too. The head of my department is from the New Life

Church, and the only time he mentioned faith was when he publicly thanked God during his investiture ceremony as a Permanent Professor, which was fine by me.

Over the last one or two years, I noted some observations of activities biased toward one religion (evangelical, fundamentalist Christianity) during duty hours in our department. I waited until our annual climate survey, from earlier this year, to note them on the open comments section. Before the survey, our Department Head clearly said he would address any problems. The incident I noted on the survey was that a couple of my fellow faculty were having religious discussions with cadets from their same church during duty hours. The door was opened, and the talk was all about activities in the New Life Church. My comment simply was that this could create an image of favoritism, and that such talk could be saved for the SPIRE (“Special Programs in Religious Education”) period in the evening, or better yet, for Sunday in Church. The talk also questioned President Obama’s faith, and I mentioned that faculty can send a very bad message to young cadets by criticizing our political leaders. It’s okay for faculty and student to chitchat, but the time is usually reserved for Extra Instruction in academics. When it came time for the boss to reveal his findings, I was surprised and very disappointed that my observations were not mentioned. One funny thing about this survey that originated from the Dean of Faculty was that they asked rank and gender, but fortunately there was a box where you could say you did not wish to mention this data. Instead he focused on various comments by evangelicals who feel they were being targeted as victims of reverse-religious discrimination, and he seemed very upset about it. I’m sure their comments were aimed at efforts from people like you to ensure that everyone’s beliefs and non-beliefs are respected. I don’t know if the Dean of Faculty specifics of this latest climate survey will be released publicly, but I am confident that they will use this new “reverse religious decimation” tactic to hinder our efforts to ensure fairness. I don’t want to raise a stink over my comments not being mentioned, but I definitely want to make you aware of this new victimization ploy.

Some of my students have asked me about the history of religious intolerance in class, and I've mentioned what I've seen and also told them to talk to me if they feel there are problems. Overall their generation is more tolerant than ours, but the usual suspects still have a lot of influence on their young minds. A few were outraged at some of the past scandals, while most told me they feel better keeping their mouths shut. One of the cadets who is a member of the New Life Church told me they are a majority here, and they should be able to share their beliefs with the Cadet Wing. Despite my best efforts at mentoring, I was unable to get him to understand what we mean by tolerance and respect.

I chose not to go into one of the supposed confidential sessions with General Gamble's team a few weeks ago simply because I had no confidence in the anonymity, and I also thought any observation I made would not be taken seriously. I think this was all an insincere initiative by the senior leadership to pretend they care about the problem which only makes the very real fundamentalist Christian oppression problems here only that much worse.

I am a very stoic, thick skinned person, but if I had to summarize my emotions over the last 17 years of observing, initially tolerating, and experiencing religious discrimination in the service, they would have to be an evolution from cynicism to sadness to utter outrage and disgust. I would be equally outraged if my fellow Catholics were openly trying to push our traditions on others. Before I left for USAFA, my dad who came to the U.S. from Colombia in his early 20s and served in the U.S. Army as a border guard on the Czechoslovakian border with Germany from 1962 to 1965 before getting his citizenship, aptly told me to remember that my only race and faith at USAFA and the AF would be the color blue. I never forgot that, but like I said, the survival mode here makes it difficult to get mad at some of the shenanigans that went on and continue to go on. Last year, General Schwartz eloquently put it when he said our faith is SERVICE. This is my personal opinion: I think that plenty of my fellow faculty prefer silence to outrage out of fear of retribution.

I'm off to (military installation withheld) in July to finish my last (number of years withheld) years before retirement, and want to take this time to thank you, Mikey, and the MRFF, for all the hard work. I can tell you that there is truly no place else to go to at

USAFA for help other than you and the MRFF when faced with religious persecution, at least without facing serious consequences for standing up. I will continue to follow all your updates and will be happy to help in any way I can. I know that some people want to believe that these shocking e-mails to you and the MRFF are not from real people at the Academy, in the USAF or in other branches of DoD and are made up. If anyone wants to know who I am, please have them contact you and we may be able to arrange a face-to-face. I am prepared to take a polygraph test for all I have reported above. I wonder if "they" at USAFA, the USAF or the rest of DoD would commit to doing the same? I just made my first donation to MRFF, and plan on joining the Constitution Society. Keep fighting, MRFF and Mikey!

Sincerely,

(USAF Academy Faculty Member's name, military rank, USAF Academy Faculty Dept. and Faculty Position withheld)



Mr Weinstein, I am one of the most senior Non-Commissioned Officers of a large military combat unit currently stationed in Afghanistan. I have been in the (military branch and number of years of service withheld) years. I was raised a Baptist but while I still consider myself to be a Christian, I am not vocal about it and am offended when so many others in my military chain of command are which is very, very frequent. Yesterday afternoon your name and the name of the Military Religious Freedom Foundation came up at the tail end of our senior staff meeting chaired by the Commanding Officer. I noticed that one of the chaplains (there were several attending) was carrying a medium size notebook binder with a peculiar sticker on the front of it entitled "Enemies of Our Lord and Savior; 1 Corinthians 15:25". I don't know what the bible quotation means? This notebook was among many others which this chaplain carried. After the meeting I asked him about it. Of course, as an NCO, the chaplain outranks me. He told me that he keeps careful track of all organizations that stands in the way of the spreading of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to the free exercise of religion given to us by the Lord. Enraged but hiding it, I asked to see it. it was a rank-ordered list. Guess who was in the "Number One" slot on his enemies

list? The MRFF was. He told me that he had placed the MRFF there in the top spot a few months ago and by doing so it knocked the ACLU out of first place and into second. Beneath the ACLU was People for the American Way, Americans United and Planned Parenthood. There were many others lower on the list but I don't remember them all. The chaplain seemed pleased that I was asking him about his "enemies list". I asked him why the MRFF was on top of that list. Listen to what he said. He actually told me with a straight face that it was because the MRFF and you, Mr. Weinstein by name, had become the most devoted servants of Satan of all the organizations out there. I wanted to say and ask many other things to him. I was afraid that he could see I was getting angry. But this chaplain is the fair haired boy of the unit's Commanding Officer and that would only spell trouble for me. I thanked him and walked away after he invited me to his nightly bible study group for our combat unit. I'm still trying to figure out what to do? Anyways, I thought you and the MRFF would want to know that you are Number One on that list. I was not a supporter very much before but knew about the MRFF as most of us do. But I will be from now on, Mr. Weinstein. I am sorry I did not speak out to that chaplain and feel bad about that. Thank you and the MRFF for being at the top of that chaplain's list. As one of my fellow NCO's said to me, it is not Satan that you serve. You and the MRFF serve Sanity instead.

(name, rank, combat specialty, combat unit and military installation withheld)



Dear MRFF:

I'm a captain in the air force, studying to pass the bar and become a JAG, and also consider myself a neo-pagan. I have been a subscriber to MRFF for three years. I donated today because I was shocked and honestly scared that such blatant bigotry could be published as mainstream opinion in the Washington Times. I trust you'll use my small contribution to continue to fight for my rights, and all other people of minority religions in the AF, who under the yoke of the evangelical mafia; and finally disinfect their breeding ground, the Academy.



(USAF Officer's name withheld)



Dear Mr. Weinstein,

on behalf of myself and my family I want to thank you and the MRFF for having the courage to speak up for and defend the Constitutional rights of all Muslim American U.S. armed forces troops, of which I am one. I read very carefully in the NY Times and the ABC news story about the horrible things that were done against my fellow U.S. soldiers and fellow Muslim Americans Spc. Khalid Lyaacoubi and Spc. Yassine Bahammou. My wife cried when she read it all because we (and most all other Muslim Americans we know in the Army) have suffered in many of the same ways as they have. I wish I had the stamina and fearlessness to go public but I just do not. The hatred is everywhere and we can trust no one. We live in fear on Fort (military installation's name withheld). Our family's crime is that we are not of the active Christian faith which is what the Army leadership makes it very clear is what they want you to follow to be the best soldier and have the best "spiritual fitness". Being Muslim is not being "spiritually fit". You have described it all so well for years in your fight as the leader of the MRFF. I have read everything on your website in the last several days since the stories became public about Spc. Lyaacoubi and Spc. Bahammou. We have ordered your book from amazon. My wife wept again when she read the words you testified to with the senate Committee of Sen. Dick Durban. You described our lives of fear and hatred and humiliation so well. We have little children. They suffer as well. No one has helped until now. Please do not reveal anything about me. Please let me still stay in touch with you and the MRFF under this way of not revealing me or my family or my base. Please tell the 2 Spc. that we can never thank them enough for coming forward. We love them both. Thank you Mr. Weinstein and the MRFF for your not being afraid of speaking of the words we all want to tell the Army but cannot because they will use them to hurt us. They already have and will again. Maybe they can be stopped from hurting us more by you and the MRFF telling about our stories to tv and the newspapers. I just do not know anymore.

(name, rank, combat MOS, military unit and installation withheld)



I am an American soldier, I am an Infantryman, and I am combat veteran of Operation Enduring Freedom. I am a Christian, I am Jew, I am an open minded free thinker. I came to MRFF for help in the fall of 2006 while attending the US Air Force Academy. If those close to me, friends, fellow soldiers, family, knew how much I support MRFF's mission, they'd want to know why. For those who will open their mind, here is the reason.

Yesterday was the one year anniversary of the first firefight I ever experienced in Afghanistan. I hardly remember much from it. I was just sitting there listening to my IPOD when everything around me just burst into explosions and sporadic pops of incoming and outgoing fire. I remember the feeling of RPGs detonating against the Hesco barriers; their shriek and thud as the concussion rippled through my guts as I death-gripped the trigger of my M4 and fired on the silhouettes 50 meters away. Go figure this would just be one of a handful of experiences that pierced the boredom of that year.

Next month will mark the one year anniversary of the night I lost my first buddy over there. He was killed by an IED during a patrol at night. I'll never forget the experience, how it felt, the anger, the pain. It's difficult to recall the event because the emotions run deep. But one thing I remember clear as day, is asking "why?" "For what?" "For freedom?" What the hell is freedom? What's this intangible object that defines a civilized and free society we call America? It's in the Soldiers creed "I am guardian of freedom and the American way of life" and the Infantryman's creed, "By my steadfast courage I have won over 200 years of freedom." By the time my boots touched American soil again I realized what it is. It's unbelievably simple, it's no wonder people over-think it like a teenager burning through an SAT test. Freedom is CHOICE; The ability to choose. Choose what? Your job? Your education? Your political representatives? Who or what you base your morals on? Take your pick; this is America! The choice is yours!

In Afghanistan, there was only Islam. Disregard freedom of speech and any open-minded thought and discussion. Even more than the Afghans, I resented what I witnessed

the Christian faith become. They both had become almost mirror images of each other, both boasting the same threats “CONVERT OR BURN IN HELL!” “MY GOD IS SUPREME! ONE NATION UNDER (INSERT DEITY HERE)! NOW BELIEVE OR ANSWER TO SATAN!” Both concepts disgusted me; to the core. Where was the individual’s choice in the matter? I saw this disturbing trend building from as far back as my brief stint at the US Air Force Academy. Some E-6 telling me I can’t go to Passover because my request never got approval from the group commander, but I could still attend the Campus Crusade for Christ Dinner on Friday night!

I took an oath to defend this country. To defend the ideals of freedom, of a human’s God-given right to choose. Mikey, his father, his children, whom all have served this free nation, took the same oath. Regardless, we find ourselves to this day, being bullied by others to believe something we disagree with. Being told that we are evil, that we are wrong, that we are shameful, that violence will be taken against us for our beliefs, regardless of our oath, our uniform, our service. Because we don’t believe the same thing they do.

I remember election week was hell for us. Between the “end of Ramadan” suicide attacks, and the anti-government violence against voting centers, our entire area of operations had turned into a powder keg dangling over a lit match. Anyone ever heard of Murphey’s Law? Pastor Terry Jones of Dove Outreach center was Murphey’s latest manifestation. Mr. “Burn a Koran Day”. Picture about 1200 pissed off Afghans storming across an ANP checkpoint like ants on their way to a picnic. Surrounding our outpost chucking rocks and burning tires while chanting “Death to American!” and “Allahu Akbar!” I remember seeing children picking up rocks as I asked myself repeatedly, “Christ, what if I have to shoot a kid?” “Who’s this asshole and does he realize what kind of effect this is having or does he just not give a rat’s ass?!” MRFFs response was uncanny, purely brilliant. If Pastor Terry was going to burn a bunch of Korans, Mikey would just have to purchase a replacement for each one. The burning never took place. I suppose Pastor Terry got the point, that or he just finally figured out how to pull his head out of his ass.

People like him exist. In the civilian world, in the military world, in the free world. They want us to believe what they believe and they will use whatever tools they have at their disposal to make us believe. In effect, they will try to take away our ability to choose. They will go as far as to twist the words of our founding fathers to declare America a “Christian Nation”, just like Iran declared themselves an “Islamic Republic” and Mullah Mohammed Omar declared Afghanistan an “Islamic Emirate”. Instead of diversity they will encourage idealistic uniformity. And in the end, we will resemble the very thing our forefathers despised most; Tyranny. Canadian Prime Minister John G. Diefenbaker once said “Freedom is the right to be wrong; not the right to do wrong.” If you want to tell me I’m wrong for practicing Christianity and Judaism because I grew up with two separate faiths in my household, that’s fine. So help my God if you try to stop me.

I miss my buddy. Not a day goes by I don’t wake up from a nightmare asking God why the hell am I still alive while better men than me are dead. So as long as I am alive and kicking, I will follow my oath. I will defend freedom; I will defend the Americans right to choice. I will defend the protesters right to burn the flag, the Muslims right to practice Islam, the Jews right to eat matza and celebrate Passover, the Christians right to say “Jesus is the Reason for the Season”, Pastor Terry’s right to be an inconsiderate ass, and the Evangelicals right to spread the word of Jesus Christ. As long as I am alive, I will defend every American against those that wish to force their beliefs on others, and take away their right to choice, because in my eyes, anyone who thinks they can pull that off, is no better than the people I killed over there.

This is my reason. This is why, for five years, I have stuck by Mikey and MRFF. Because when all else fails, chain of command, Equal Opportunity, Inspector General, JAGs,; where else can the true defenders of freedom turn to safeguard the very same rights they swore an oath to protect? This is my advocate, this is who will go to bat for me in places I cannot. “I stand ready to deploy, engage, and destroy the enemies of the United States of America in close combat.” And MRFF will do the same for me to protect my right to choose a faith.

(U.S. Army Combat Soldier's name and rank withheld)

xxTroop

xxxx Cavalry

Task Force xxxxxx

xxxxxth Infantry Brigade Combat Team (XXXXXXXXX)



Again the military wants to be seen as “PC” and caring, so they do climate survey after climate survey and conclude: there’s nothing wrong with the type, amount, and level of religious expression in the ranks and everyone is free to express themselves safely. And yet I can’t count how many times I’ve heard it said by so many from all ranks that “The US was founded by and for Christians and they may proselytize however, whenever, and wherever they please. Everyone else should shut up and be grateful they at least have the right to practice whatever they want.” This is usually followed by the mature and well-thought-out “Except Muslims. We should make them illegal”

Way to go Mikey, you go after them.

Name Withheld



Gentlemen:

Enclosed with this letter is a 200-dollar money order for MRFF. I support MRFF in its campaign to defend the religious freedom of all U.S. servicemen. By doing so, MRFF defends the freedom of all Americans. I fully commend MRFF for standing up for the principles of our constitutional republic, and one of these principles is that the government shall not endorse one religion against other religions. I say this as a dedicated (and Very Liberal) Christian.

I greatly admire Mike Weinstein, a courageous fighter on behalf of religious freedom for all U.S. citizens. He is precisely the kind of person that we need in this battle: he knows the law, and he has the moral and personal courage to defend what he knows to be morally and legally right. He has impeccable credentials: a graduate of the U.S. Air Force Academy, and a military lawyer in the Reagan administration. He has spread the alarm about the anti-Semitism tolerated and even encouraged by the Religious Right in the U.S. military, but he has taken into account the rights of all those, including Christians, whose rights are being abrogated by fundamentalists. He has also stood manfully against the homosexual-bashing and the Islam-bashing orchestrated by the propagandists of the Religious Right. What a magnificent man, a hero to those who love liberty.

I am a dedicated Christian, and I believe that the Religious Right represents a grave and present danger to our constitutional republic and the freedoms that we have enjoyed. On the one hand are the dispensationalists, who want to foment war in the Middle East to hasten the end of the world. On the other hand are the dominionists, who want to replace our secular constitutional republic with a theocratic dictatorship. While these two groups have different viewpoints, they both represent a danger to American principles and democratic government.

I am heartened that MRFF has been nominated twice for the Nobel Peace Prize. It would be wonderful if the Nobel committee awarded the 2011 Peace Prize to your worthy organization.

Once again, kudos to MRFF and to Mike Weinstein. Keep up the good work to defend our constitutional freedoms. Fight the Christian fundamentalists. And remember: Courage!!!!

Sincerely yours,

(name withheld)



As the 4th of July approaches and we reflect on the Founding of Our Country, it is important for us to also reflect on the Foundations of our Country. Currently hundreds of thousands of members of the Armed Forces are stationed all over the world with one main reason for their deployment: to protect the United States of America and the values of which this Country was founded on. This Holiday requires us to understand these values and put them in perspective, regardless of our personal opinions, views or religion.

As a Survivor of 9/11, I often think about what these values are, as many of my friends in Law Enforcement and Public Safety were killed on that fateful day. I wonder what they died for, and why thousands of members of our Armed Forces died since then. During the last 10 years my views have extensively changed and I've come to real conclusion that what has made this Country strong is our seemingly undying belief that this Country should protect the weakest of our population, the minority of the people against everyone from political tyrants to religious extremists.

I've also come to the conclusion that we currently face in this Country an enemy that wants to pervert the Founding principles of this Country in order to promote their religious extremism and hateful agenda. They have come together under a new banner, claiming to be Christian, claiming to be following the Founding Fathers' principles, and have used the problems of this Country, the trials that we face as an excuse for their behavior. They ignore the weak, in favor of the strong, ignore the poor in favor of the rich and attack those who cannot defend themselves while using the name of God.

The Oath of Enlistment/Commissioning requires that all members of the Armed Forces declare that they will "Support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic." Now we are faced with a domestic attack from religious extremists who have infiltrated our Military in order to prevent the vast majority of our Armed Forces from defending the Constitution. While they are garbed in various manners of uniforms, they wear the uniforms of Crusaders, in a self-proclaimed war against anyone who does not follow their extremist doctrine. They believe that the US Constitution should be burned, destroyed and replaced with a new document that requires

all Soldiers and Citizens to follow one belief and never have an opinion that deviates from that belief.

Mikey, I want to personally thank you for taking a stance, at an extreme personal toll to you, your family and the Military Religious Freedom Foundation to fight for what is right and fight for the Principles of the United States Constitution. This fight is not about what is popular, nor even what is “best” but instead what is Just, Right and Honorable. Continue your fight knowing that the vast majority of us support your cause to determine the future of Our Country.

Best wishes and Good Luck,

Pace Lattin

pace@pacelattin.com



Dear MRFF:

I'm a US Army Chaplain and see my existence in the US Army Chaplain core being rooted in the 1st amendment. I appreciate your steadfastness to ensure the free exercise of religion among our armed forces. Although I am a Protestant Chaplain, I was trained to protect and facilitate the freedom of all faiths including those of no faith group. A good friend of mine has become the first active duty Army Buddhist Chaplain and I feel privileged to serve with him as he provides for the religious needs of the some 3000 Buddhist Soldiers. Spirituality is an important part of many Soldiers life and Chaplains like my friend go with Soldiers all over the world providing for their freedom of religion. This is something to be celebrated and I think you should reflect this on your 'about us' page. Furthermore, the Army has just commissioned it's first Hindu Chaplain. Most Chaplains understand the importance of being present for Soldiers in need, and providing for their spiritual needs. I see great value in your partnering with military Chaplains in education and awareness training because the foundation of the Chaplain core and MRF is the 1st



amendment. I appreciate any feedback that might help me understand how I can better protect the 1st amendment freedom of Soldiers in the US Army.

(name withheld)



Dear Military Religious Freedom Foundation:

I did not sign up to be told what faith I should be in or whether I should be spiritual or not and at Ft Eustis (and later at a pre-deployment briefing) the intent to impose a faith or recommend spirituality was made clear. This is not how true Christian faith works, this is instead some form of an ad-hoc mutation ... a shiny wrap of bible text around a box full of vengeance, whim, and bullying. The same way the U.S. Army imposed its will on 200 soldiers at Fort Eustis and call it a “misunderstanding”, you bully the rest of the world and call it freedom, liberation, and humanitarianism. If you can bully a few of your own, you can certainly do so to the rest of the world. I cannot sense honor in serving in such a confused organization.

(U.S. Army Soldier’s name, rank, MOS and combat duty station in Afghanistan withheld)



Dear Military Religious Freedom Foundation,

Having read today’s article in the “Colorado Springs Independent”, I am convinced more than ever the leadership at my beloved USAFA is only dedicated to fluffy, empty statements when it comes to dealing with the need to tolerate and respect beliefs different than those of the dominionist “Christians” that hijacked our institution over twenty years ago. The consequences have been devastating to the lives of hundreds and hundreds of outstanding cadets, officers, enlisted, and civilians.

The fact that the USAFA leadership sees anyone, who wants to uphold the establishment and practice clauses of the First Amendment, which is part of the Constitution we swore or affirmed to defend, as trying to undermine the institution’s goals is ludicrous and cowardly.

As a cadet in the early 1990s, I saw blatant evangelization by the officer and cadet minions of the New Life Church and other dominionist organizations. Back then I was too immature to understand the seriousness of the problem, and I just wanted to survive the rigors of USAFA. On active duty I have run into dominionists in every assignment, and I finally woke up when I read what the Weinstein family and other fine individuals had to put up with.

I made it a personal goal to teach at USAFA because of my love for the institution and the inspiration a handful of great instructors gave me. I came in knowing there were still serious problems thanks to the valiant efforts of Mikey Weinstein and MRFF. In my first month alone, I noticed during the New Instructor Orientation that they breezed through a couple of PowerPoint slides taking about religious tolerance, notice I didn't mention respect. The briefer was just an action officer, instead of one of the three generals. During that orientation, one of my new colleagues started talking about her religion, and I told her that needed to be kept out of the work environment, and that the cadets have designated times (SPIRE) and places (the chapel) where they can practice and share their faith. She replied that it was her duty to spread the gospel.

My Department Head is a dedicated member of the New Life Church and only pretended to care about improving the religious climate at USAFA. During my first few months at USAFA, his wife asked my wife what she thought about Colorado Springs at USAFA so far. My wife replied that she was happy, but was appalled at how people can't keep their religion to themselves. Needless to say, things got awkward very quickly, and I'm sure the Colonel's wife mentioned my wife's comments to him. The same zealous instructor I dealt with during my first week, invited my wife to a get together at her house, which wound up being a trap to come to Bible Study.

My Department Head's blatant dishonesty manifested itself earlier this year. He ostensibly was very motivated to get us all to participate in a very important Dean of Faculty climate survey that would give us an opportunity to note the good, the bad, and the ugly about how things were going. He promised to address every single concern at the

next department meeting. I took the survey, which had places for open comments. The survey did not do a very good job protecting our identity because you could narrow things down by rank, position, etc. I decided to point out two black and white incidents that could create a perception of favoritism and unprofessional behavior among our young cadets: 1) An instructor from the New Life Church constantly having cadets from that same church in her office to talk about nothing but religion. 2) That same instructor and another instructor from her church bashing our President for his alleged lack of religion. These two incidents occurred in a corridor in my department, where there is a lot of cadet traffic. What did cadets think when they heard this? I would definitely think they would pick up the favoritism aspect.

When the time came for the Colonel to share the result of the survey, he prefaced his comments with, "I have to share something very disturbing." My initial thought was relief that he was about to share my concerns and those of others. Instead, this spineless senior officer had the temerity to say that religious discrimination was not a problem, but "reverse religious discrimination" was growing. He specified by saying that many evangelicals in the Faculty felt they were being attacked and ridiculed constantly. Really, Colonel? This was one of the most pathetic acts of desperation I have seen from the very people that started the very problem we are trying to fix. I never heard anyone attack the dominionists. They have a right to believe and practice their faith with the simple condition that they do not do it in an unsolicited manner or use their rank and power to impose it in the work environment. I will also add that in the hallways of my department I heard a tenured member say "Fucking Mikey Weinstein is at it again" when MRFF complained about that poor excuse for an investigation also known as "The Gamble Report. Again, this was not only unprofessional; it could also have been overheard by cadets who look to us to be the example.

My last few months at USAFA also witnessed the farcical National Character and Leadership Symposium", where General Gould's wife, a retired Colonel, and a graduate known [well] for his football skills shoved their religion down the throats of the attendees. Again, most of us are mature enough to call that out, but cadets are generally idealistic,

impressionable and not mature enough to understand. On my last week of official activities at USAFA, I had the honor of attending the commissioning ceremony of one of my outstanding cadets, only to be outraged by the way in which the program for the ceremony was written. The entire oath was written in the program with no option to “affirm” and the words “SO HELP ME GOD” being the only ones in all capital letters. The ceremony was held at the home and in the presence of Brigadier General Clark, the same General who sent an email essentially telling cadets to disregard a September 2010 comment at USAFA from our Chief of Staff, General Schwartz, where he aptly had stated “Service is our faith”, as he was trying to enforce the need to fix the persistent religious problems at USAFA. How do you think the cadets who do not believe in God or would prefer not to “swear” felt during what is supposed to be a very special moment for them?

My four years at the USFA faculty were thoroughly enjoyable given the fact that I worked with outstanding colleagues and cadets, notice I did not say leaders. Two of our three generals are more committed to their religion than they are to their duty. The third, Brigadier General Born, is simply a limp leader, who only tells her people what they want to hear. She lacks the moral courage to speak up. As for Chaplain Bruno, a Catholic priest, I should have sat down with him to tell him how my AOC and his cronies told me I could not be saved for belonging to a cult like the Catholic Church, and how many of the dominionists at USFA have used the word “Great Whore” to describe a church that is part of my culture. With VERY FEW EXCEPTIONS, my impression of Department Heads and the three generals at USAFA is that they are comfortable in their positions and prefer not to make any noise, even if it’s the right thing to do.

General Schwartz: Sir, if you decide to replace these three individuals, it would only be part of the solution. The full solution is to replace them with people dedicated to upholding our Core Values, which includes having the guts to protect and respect the rights of our members to practice or not practice any faith, and most importantly not declaring an official religion at USAFA.

The current leadership at USAFA practices a gross combination of passive defiance and foot-dragging when it comes to enforcing religious tolerance and respect. Talking to

cadets in evangelical code or using the “reverse religious discrimination” card are simply delaying tactics.

Most cadets are just like me 20 years ago: they want to survive a very arduous four-year journey and have little time, and too much fear of retribution, to report problems. I applaud those cadets and permanent party members who have stood up. Above all, I continuously hail Mikey and the MRFF for putting their credibility and personal safety on the line to make sure we are heard!

(Recent Former USAF Academy Professor and Graduate’s name, rank, AFSC and military installation all withheld)



Mikey:

I have no power to peer into the mind of former Chaplin Klingenschmitt, so what I am about to say is simply my gut reaction to his call into the Mike Regan talk show and Sean Hannity show on the same day about 9 years ago. When he told of his disagreement with his boss over the issue of praying at official events/services as he wanted to, he of course got my attention immediately. I had just learned about Curtis’ abominable treatment at the USAF Academy and I wanted to pass on the key information to you and to hear what this Chaplin’s experience had been.

In the first call (to the Hannity show- I think), I kept an open mind and thought he might be in the right. Then he gave himself away when he whined about his dubious future and not knowing how he would take care of his wife and their pet Labrador. I felt like screaming at the radio, “You’re worried about a dog? Protecting the Constitution and our republic is what you should worry about!” I calmed down and later in the afternoon I heard the 2nd call he made to the other talk show. Then I really became angry. He was reading from a script, saying the same words he had said in the first call. I had to grit my teeth and pray hard to not scream when he invoked his whimpering voice to say once again that he didn’t know what was going to happen to his dog.

The Chaplin's superior officer was alerted to the call and called in the talk show and set the record straight. His superior stated that he as a Baptist minister had always prayed exactly as he chose to in any setting and that Klingenschmitt had not been ordered to omit the phrase "in Jesus name" at the end of any prayer. The issue was his disobeying a direct order to not participate in a public protest while wearing his Navy uniform and other incidences of insubordination.

My gut had been right. He tried to portray himself as a dog-loving preacher who just want to serve the kingdom and to pray as he had been taught to do, but his actions clearly showed him to be a fraud, a modern day "Pharisee" ironically whom he most certainly had criticized in many sermons. I don't think he was worried about his career at all. I think he wanted to be forced out of the Navy and to launch his new career. The tone of his earlier prayers about you expressed pure hatred. I am not swayed by his appeal for your conversion. I do not trust his motives. I do not believe his words. I don't even think he loved that dog.

Mikey, I hope people becoming aware of this blatant violation of our Constitution will trust their gut and know that you and MRFF are not the enemy of Christianity, Agnosticism, Buddhism or any other ism. You are rather the champion of truth and a defender of our Constitution. I know it stings to know that in some places of worship you have been referred to as Satan's field marshal, but remember in the prayers of thousands of Catholic and Protestant military members oppressed by their errant superiors for not being "Christian enough", the MRFF clients are thanking God for you and your work.

The framers of our Constitution must have known that chaos was inevitable if a government, even one led by a great man like George Washington, involved itself in the choosing of a state religion for the citizenry. As I have told you before, we Christians can't even agree on how the serve communion. Just how would the government legislate that issue?

No matter what lies are written about MRFF and about you personally, history will show that you are on the right side of this battle.

Keep holding your arms up!

(name and e mail address withheld)



I wish I had the words Mikey. I wish I had the vocabulary to express how deep my thanks goes to you, MRFF, and everyone you call “client”, for standing up at great risk to their career to support our Constitution. In my 25+ years of service I’ve never seen, nor heard of, a General Officer regardless of status or position, put into words our obligation to Religious Equality, and I’ve NEVER seen a ‘directive reminder’ to support our Constitution.

The highest Air Force authority has (FINALLY) stated loud and clear for all Airman to hear—-Support and Defend the Constitution! General Schwartz has reminded every Air Force member from the youngest new Airman to the seasoned Officer, our Oath is REAL, our duty to the Constitution is not an option, and Service Before Self means putting the greater good of our Constitution before a personal spiritual belief.

While our Chief of Staff is now viewed as a “trend setter” in DoD, we all know what made this possible—-YOU. Truly a great victory for you Mikey, a great victory for MRFF, and even greater victory for all who serve in the greatest military on earth.

I salute you Mikey.

Thank you.

(name withheld)



Dear Mikey,

This morning at about 0800 I got an email saying we had new read files, which are documents that every cadet must read and then initial that they signed it. While I believe this is a good step, I’m not sure all cadets will fully read the documents and an issue such as this should be briefed where all cadets will listen. It’s funny that it took you posting a

billboard with the letter on it for the academy to do something about it. Do they really not think it is an issue or do they just not care? I thought I would give spire a chance, just to see how it was so I went to Cru. It was fine at first but when I didn't show up one Monday a few of the cadets made small comments saying that God would help me with my grades more than EI (Academic "Extra Instruction") will. Who says that? Seriously, I mean what are they teaching these cadets to make them think their religion and going to Spire on a Monday is going to help them more than going to get EI with a teacher. So then I stopped showing up to spire and realized just how much of a big deal this is. Yeah they try to tell us it isn't a problem but I saw firsthand how it really is a problem, and when it takes a month to send an email to us cadets from the Chief of Staff of the Air Force it shows how messed up our leadership is. I sat around for weeks wondering if any cadets would hear about this email, if our leadership would show what kind of problem was at this school and they failed...again. They covered it up just like anything else they don't want to deal with. I'm glad you were able to show the message to the community and force General Gould's hand to do the right thing. Mikey you fight everyday to make this place safe for the cadets who are pressured by the spire groups, and the cadets that attend spire.

Sincerely,

A cadet who wouldn't feel safe here without you and what you do. (USAF Academy Cadet's name, rank, title and Cadet Wing Squadron withheld)

P.S. If they try to say it isn't a problem and spire isn't directly related to the cadet wing, then why do the spire leaders have proximity cards to access the cadet area at any time they wish? They are not permanent party or cadets, they SHOULD NOT possess a proxy card. They like all other visitors should have to be escorted in...what makes them special?





Mikey,

Isn't it a shame that the Chief of Staff has to resort to doing this to get his message out to everyone in USAFA? I remember being in the military that when you were told (ordered) by your superior to do something, you went ahead and did it. If you didn't, you were then charged with insubordination and then disciplined. What message are we sending to the cadets and others in the Air Force?—that Gen Gould can do (or this case not do) what he wants; isn't he accountable for his action?

I guess this is the problem with our officers nowadays; they've either forgotten or refused to follow the oath they swore to their God to do—"that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States...that I will obey the orders of the President of the United States and the orders of the officers appointed over me....So help me God."

I suppose this is reason why we need you Mikey—who else can stand up against Gen Gould and get this billboard posted on the academy ground? Well done!

Take care,

(a classmate of Mikey's at the USAFA)



Dear Mikey and MRFF,

Here we are, almost a whole month after Gen Schwartz, our Air Force Chief of Staff, released a memorandum addressed to the ENTIRE Air Force, setting the record straight about the need for religious neutrality in every level of command. The letter, which was unprecedented, starts, "Leaders at all levels..." which conveys the obvious intent for the message to be disseminated down to the lowest levels of command, yet here at the Air Force Academy, the letter remains somewhat of a mystery. Various news sources state that our Superintendent, Lt Gen Gould, and our Dean of Faculty, Brig Gen Born, shared the memo with their respective staffs and leaders, but I remain baffled about why the letter hasn't been officially released. In fact, I find it unconscionable that such an important directive hasn't been sent to the lowest levels, especially in light of the fact that other Air

Force units did so immediately. A “Dist-P” (meaning that every person with a USAFA email account gets it) would have been the easiest, most efficient way to take care of this, but no. I got my copy from you. And now, thanks to you, others can see it in great big letters: on a billboard outside the Academy. Thanks for all you do, Mikey.

(USAF Academy faculty member’s name, rank, title and academic dept. withheld)



Mr. Weinstein, I am a cadet at West Point. I am facing terrible harassment from Christian evangelicals here above me in the Corps chain of command. . There are so many. In many ways I am like your daughter, Amber. I am female and I read, this afternoon, the news article below on your MRFF website. And when I read Amber’s words at the end of the article, I had tears in my eyes. She expressed my very same thoughts and emotions. I sent it to my parents and they cried too. I know I am not alone as many other cadets here too are being persecuted, alot of them are Christians. Amber’s words have given me new strength and courage. Please thank her for me and all of us here. And thank you MRFF for being there for those many of us in the shadow of fear. Please keep fighting for us, Mr. Weinstein. If we try to fight back for ourselves we only multiply the hatred against us. Please do not release my name, cadet rank or USMA cadet company or class year. One day I hope to meet you. Thank you. Thank MRFF. Thank Amber.

(West Point Cadet’s personal identifiers all withheld)



Mikey,

I just called to reserve a spot to see you at the AU presentation, and was told that I missed the cutoff for RSVP.

I’ve known you for years. You gave me a lot of encouragement about the good things possible for our Air Force Academy and for the armed services regarding the

religious persecution and pro-secting that I witnessed and experienced when I was a cadet in the Class of 1969. My life was shaken up by those people (and I didn't have anyone to talk to about that for decades). I'm so glad that you are helping with the daunting task of developing a level ground for people of all faiths and none to serve our country with respect and dignity.

Only today did I realize that there was a cutoff date for the RSVP to celebrate your award on November 7.

I've been fighting for my continued existence for many years now, and sometimes it gets nearly overwhelming with the blend of serving others and working on rebuilding my own health that I have been focusing on for decades now. I simply did not register the fact that there was an RSVP date (other things distracted me, life-and-death situations with patients, etc.).

There are indignities that I have experienced that I will not list in this email. I hold advanced degrees but financially it has been difficult to manage — long before the whole world underwent economic stress recently. Recently I received some money for work that I did and I am able to give the \$20 donation to attend; it would be my pleasure to contribute in that way, so I am not asking for free attendance.

I called and asked if I could be on a waiting list re the late RSVP and was told that that position had been used up already. Then I asked if I could simply come and wait in the lobby of the building so that I could say hello and shake your hand either before or after you go to the meeting room.

Whatever happens, I want to again say how proud I am of what you and your family has made possible for so many. Things like religious persecution and threat of persecution are like poisons holding people back from realizing the good things that are possible in life.

Thanks, brother. And thanks to all the people in MRFF.

Respectfully,

(name and location withheld)



Hi, Mikey.

Thank you so much for the kind note. It was such a pleasure to attend and witness your being honored in such a meaningful way for your tireless efforts.

I have to say that I was truly struck by Bonnie's heart-felt description of what it's like to live under the constant intimidation and threat of harm you and your family must endure. You are all clearly very special people to be able to maintain your humor through it all. I know you feel that your clients are the real heroes in this fight, but in my book you and your family are no less heroic.

(name withheld)

Congratulations!



Mikey,

I am so proud that Americans United selected you to receive our first Person of the Year Award. I was moved by your testimony and impressed with your courage. I spoke to you briefly right after your talk, and you gave me a business card (hence this email). I live in Columbia, South Carolina, and am wondering if MRF has a contact at Ft. Jackson. I am the Columbia chapter president of AU and would love to forge a connection to help defend the wall of separation (which needs a lot of defending in SC). Better yet, do you ever come to South Carolina?

(name withheld)



Dear Mikey Weinstein,

Your support during my deployment was professional, the most prized blessings I received. As a Muslim minority fighting the war against terrorism abroad, you knew the problem that I was facing; unjust discrimination and unbelievable mistrust among those who I am teaming up with. It will be beyond any regular U.S. Citizen to understand the hardship that all religious minorities endure, especially Muslim American soldiers. Mikey you did understand all of this and completely felt my emotional pain.

I have no parents in the United States to have them complain on my behalf. Furthermore, even if they were living in states, they would most likely not know where to go or whom to trust and talk to as they're first generation immigrants and countless roadblocks would confront them.

Mikey what you did was what a loving father would do for his own kid. When I was so distraught and seeking help you replied immediately. That reply give me confidence and got my self-esteem back.

The psychological game that I was undergoing due to my Muslim faith was harsh. U.S. taxpayers ignore what it is like to face the backlash from other soldiers when we hear on the news that one criminal with a Muslim background committed an act of terrorism in the United States. Combat teamwork and morale would lose its meaning and once you asked for an explanation the reply would be that we're soldiers first. When you're discriminated against you will feel it no matter how much the other side covers it up.

Mikey understands it all and I am so glad and thankful to have people like him and the Military Religious Freedom Foundation in our society.

Words are never good at expressing the true depth of the heart's feelings. I find mere "thank you" so inadequate. Nonetheless, there is no other way to tell you how much I appreciate your being there for me in my time of need.

Thank you my friend. From the bottom of my heart,  
(U.S. Army Soldier's name, rank, MOS, combat unit and installation withheld)



Hi Mikey,

Had the opportunity to read MRFF statement to joint congressional/Senatorial hearings. Read about the Moroccan guys story and their sad stories. Very proud of you guys !

How these congress men are will inform their constituents about the next traits which is the Mexican Drug Cartel? Would they tell that they should not trust Latinos government members because somehow one of their family member back in their home state ( Mexico ) work or not sure yet but perhaps // hostage to the Mexican Drug Cartel ( and they are OPEN investigation ?? Or maybe they have not found something yet but they are under sleepy Wolf list ? Means they might be bad guys in five or ten years ?

Would they say that we should not trust the Mayor of L.A because he has a Latino background and maybe he's in bed with the Mexican cartel ? How would we live our daily lives if these propaganda are really believed among citizen ? This insanity among congress men should be stopped and be brought to Justice. I hope people will get back to our founding father wise rules and follow our simple US constitution. Simple, fair where none is above the law.

Thank you Mikey for your hard work and have no idea how you do it but you have a tough job ahead :D

Thank you Mikey,

(name withheld)



Mr. Weinstein and MRFF,

My family and I wanted to thank you for helping us. We had absolutely NO PLACE else to turn. Despite the claims of so-called critics about MRFF being on a witch hunt for Christians, we know you help thousands of service members, most of whom are Christians like my wife and I are. My wife, a particularly devout Christian by both education

and practice, and I are finally getting help thanks to your and MRFF's hard work on our behalf. These hurtful issues of religious persecution from Christian fundamentalists in my military chain of command we have faced have made our family life terribly difficult, my wife's health has plummeted and even my ability to heal from surgeries has diminished. Many people forget the impact which the stress and total misery of religious persecution has on a person or a family. Now, we are waiting to see what the outcome will be when the military investigation ends (thanks to the MRFF) and hoping things will finally be in our favor. I know there are hundreds, if not thousands of members who are too afraid to ask for help from the MRFF and are punished for seeking help. How do I know this? Because I was one of them. I finally took a stand and reached out to you and the MRFF and regret nothing. Anyone else in the same boat should do as I did and seek the MRFF's help. The total confidentiality has been a blessing and allowed me to work towards being a better person and military enlisted member and making a better life for me and my family. Having a child and another child due soon makes life hard enough and the lack of caring and horrible religious abuse from my installation removed all hopes and my moral. It has gotten to the point that I put on my uniform in shame and hide the fact I serve because the "best of the best" proved they were no better than common thieves or abusive arrogant crooks. While I will never feel the pride I once had I can at least look forward to a (hopefully) better future. I still have contact with over a dozen ex military members who quit a career because of the persecution and damages they received from fundamentalist Christians above them in their chains of command. These victims were great leaders with a possible career that was destroyed and never looked back because of the lack of professionalism and extremist Christian religious hatred they experienced. Tragically, a local friend tried to commit suicide twice because no one would listen to her and refused to take action against the other NCO's (friends actually) who were causing the religious bigotry torment. While this prejudice is still very prevalent and truly taking ages to get better, at least we can see some changes and have a glimmer of hope. It is this hope which you and the MRFF bring to us who ask for your help, Mr. Weinstein.

Thanks again to you, Mr. Weinstein, and all of the people at the MRFF who stand up for those of us who are the most vulnerable to this unjust religious prejudice.

(United States Military member's name, rank, branch of service, military unit and military installation withheld)



Dear Mr. Weinstein:

As part of my current bible study series, we were tasked with identifying what person has had the biggest impact in our Christianity. After a long thought I came down to two people, my grandfather and yourself. Part of our study was to let the individual know how they have had an impact. Since my grandfather is no longer with us, I decided to take a moment and write to you.

I have considered myself a Christian for years but have been uninvolved in the church for the last 10 years or so. Upon my assignment to Colorado Springs, I joined a local church and began to focus more on my relationship with God and Jesus. As I study and learn more of what the Bible teaches, I have learned that it is a tasking of all Christians to spread the Good News that faith in Jesus brings an everlasting life and forgiveness of your sins. I believe (as do most Christians that I know) that the way to do this is to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to hear about Jesus without any pressure to convert to Christianity. I also feel that I am guaranteed the right to do this by the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution which states "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof".

Given this fact, you have been instrumental in my faith. Your insistence in attempting to prohibit the free exercise of religion in the military has resulted in me focusing more intently upon my understanding of my chosen religion. Outside of the values instilled in me by my family, the most polarizing effect on my Christianity has been observing the continual push to rid it from the American society. Since you have been one of the most



constant and vocal opponents of Christianity, you have single-handedly caused me to have a much stronger relationship with my God and my savior, Jesus Christ.

I write this letter not to berate you or bring discredit to your cause but rather to thank you! I have known for some time that I was not strong enough in my religion and your actions have provided the push that I needed to work on it. I hope that one day you may come to know the joy and peace that Jesus provides. You will forever be in my prayers.

Respectfully,

(name withheld)



Dear Mikey,

This year, we were able to make a \$1,800 donation to the MRFF. I know that you appreciate the significance of the amount.

Of course, funds are necessary for any organization. More importantly, I want to acknowledge and offer my appreciation for all of your work.

You are on the “front lines” every day of every year. While we all suffer the frustration of even having religious freedom issues arise, it is you (and your family) that bear the brunt of the hostility and disrespect of those that you are compelled to confront.

I admire your zeal and your resolve. It takes a very special person to continuously deal with the ignorance & prejudice that has, unfortunately, come to permeate so much of our military in the last two decades.

Col. K., USAF (ret.)



Hi Mikey,

Saw the info on the new book—congrats, I can’t wait to read it. You know, I thought of the foundation again the other week when I was at the AETC Symposium in San Antonio. No

mention was made in any of the sessions about how to handle religious matters in training and education even though this would have been a great opportunity to reiterate the CSAF's stance given USAFA's on-going issues, the "Jesus Loves Nukes" fiasco out at Vandenberg, and the AFROTC curriculum problems this past year. I was very disappointed these matters were not discussed especially since 3500 people were in attendance from across the Command. What a perfect opportunity to put everyone on the same page! I was, however, subjected to prayers offered by Christian chaplains before lunch both days. And these were not optional lunches—we paid \$95 in conference fees and lunches were included, thus we only got partial per diem and would not have been reimbursed if we decided to go have a "non-prayer" lunch on our own. As always, I did not bow my head and made sure to stare around the room in protest only to reap the usual evil stares from all those "Amen"ing in Jesus' name. To be honest, its sometimes pretty embarrassing, especially since we had so many International/Allied partners in attendance.

Have a great weekend!

(USAF MRFF Client's name, rank, AFSC and installation withheld)



Mikey,

You and I have communicated before. I am the former Air Force lieutenant who served as an (position withheld) in the sixties.

I just read your commentary about that flaming asshole Boykin and I applaud you vigorously. I especially appreciated your string of adjectives to describe this moron.

I wish I had some money to contribute to your cause, but my wife and I have fallen on hard times lately — like so many other decent Americans. That includes ill health, so we must squeeze every penny.

But I want you to know that your passion has not gone unnoticed in these parts. Thank you for your efforts.

(name withheld)



Bonjour Mikey ! A little word you may find useful, as I read the word “Crusaders”. I don’t know whether I told you I make my living as a tour guide, especially to Americans.

Since about a year, I have made it a point to ask every single US teenager I meet, and I meet a lot of them,

what the Crusades were.

NOT ONE KNEW.

Not a single one.

Teaching history. After teaching literacy, the number one task for the US school system.

And on a different track : I wish us French anarchists had fighters like you !!! Sigh...

Well, keep on socking it to the bad guys !!!!

Bravo, comme d'habitude,

(name withheld)



Dear MRFF:

I applaud you most emphatically for the tremendous work you do. This country needs to remember that it wasn't based on Christianity, but freedom of religion. Thank you from the bottom of my heart. You are fantastic. I am not able to donate right at the present, but should be able to do so within a couple of months. You are wonderful.

(name withheld)



Dear MRFF,

Please pass along my thanks to the US Military Academy's leadership and chaplaincy for inviting Gen Boykin to be their guest speaker at their National Prayer Breakfast. For too long, my alma mater (the USAF Academy), has taken heat almost alone for inviting polarizing evangelicals to speak and pray, and using official government e-mail and endorsements from senior leadership to badger active duty military to attend. USAFA's denials aside, it's environment of implied evangelical endorsement (supported by off-base mega-churches and fundamentalist nearby organizations) and message that christian

spiritual “health and strength” is a prerequisite for strong character and honor has monopolized negative service academy media attention. But that’s no longer the case! By publicizing the appearance of arch-islamophobe Boykin, chastised several times over for preaching hatred in uniform at churches while on active duty, USMA has grabbed the standard (a cross?) and marched to the forefront of this contra-Constitutional crusade. Stupidity this profound demands intentionality—and, as a USAFA grad, I’m happy to see USMA surpass (at least for the moment) its fellow service academies. Well done, Army! Well done!

(USAF Academy Official’s name, rank, title and position withheld)



Dear MRFF,

I do not believe that not one of the dozen or so Marines posing next to a Nazi SS flag did not know what it was. Are Americans so ignorant? Is the US army so pathetic that it takes the dregs of US society into its ranks? If so, even that is an offense.

The actions of those Marines make all Americans less safe. Already, Americans have earned a terrible reputation internationally for being un-democratic, prejudiced, hateful, ignorant and excessively violent. Even traditional US allies are disgusted by Americans. This action only promotes that view. If those Marines were truly ignorant, then they must be given sensitivity training in the most public of ways. If they are found to be among the racist and anti-Semitic segment of the US population then they should be made to quit the US army and be court-martialed, if not tried civilly for publicly promoting hate and defaming the United States.

There must be a punishment for associating the US flag with that of the Nazi SS. This outrage cannot be ignored.

May America re-discover democracy and promote democratic values internationally. I suppose it can ask present-day Germans for help.

Thank you,

(name withheld)



Dear Bekki and Mikey,

Thank you for bringing this shameful display to my attention. This leads to a deeper question: To what extent are Christian "militias," Nazi sympathizers and other threats to our nation's security being trained in the military? Here's an article reprinted from Newsweek that provides some evidence of this danger:

<http://www.thedailybeast.com/newsweek/blogs/declassified/2010/04/09/ex-members-of-u-s-military-were-members-of-hutaree-militia-extremist-group.html>

It says in part: "Federal investigators have discovered that two members of the extremist Michigan-based Hutaree militia group charged with plotting to assassinate law-enforcement officers are former U.S. military servicemen, including a Marine Corps corporal who was a Persian Gulf War veteran and decorated expert rifleman."

As you know, our military provides very expensive, excellent training to its inductees. So long as these skills are used to uphold our Constitution and protect our national security, that's fine. But, if internal security threats utilize this training to prepare for attacks on our nation, that's a very different story.

I am proud to support MRFF's work. Thank you for all you do.

(name withheld)



I am always the first to rebuff any attempts to subdue the combat actions of our Marines. "They were placed in such serious, sometimes unanswerable situations especially when it gets pretty damned combat deadly, (Korea & combat Nam Marine here) but... this time, no alibi from me. I do not see the U S Army deprecating we Sioux who killed quite a few of them for two decades under Chief Red Cloud and later Crazy Horse at Tongue River and the Big Horn. We were bigger, had combat oriented horses, the Winchester repeater and both hands to aim with- plus damn good Chiefs. The Cavalry had only one hand to aim their single shot Sharps that jammed on the 2nd round on a hot day and gun shy horses. Buffalo hunting takes the gunshyness out of a horse. But – No ...- I am with the Jew warrior brother- Mikey Weinstein- Military Religious Freedom Foundation for setting the record straight.

(name withheld)



MRFF,

My name is Lt Col Eric Schroeder. As a 1993 USAF Academy graduate and active duty Air Force officer, I share your experience and have witnessed first-hand the fervent, pervasive and unconstitutional movement to "Christianize" the entire military. I have served around

the world. I have flown over 100 combat support missions, been awarded the Bronze Star, and have personally witnessed the carnage that a road-side bomb can cause to lives and machines. I have been deployed for nearly 1/3 of my children's lives. My family has sacrificed greatly to ensure this country remains free.

Looking back at my 19 years of service, I can honestly say that I have seen the enemy, and it is not out there... it is within. The biggest threat to our freedom today is not the terrorist; they can only kill — they cannot take our freedom. It is the Christian fundamentalist movement that looks to impose its own agenda on the nation that stands by and watches it happen; a nation that I fear no longer understands what freedom means. We continually turn a blind eye as we watch our rights systematically taken away by a group of individuals that believe their morality is divine and those who don't see it the same way are scorned and labeled "un-American."

I have stood in formations of airman as prayers from 4-star leadership ask the Christian God for protection and guidance, and bible verses are read. I have listened to pastors pray over me and my fellow soldiers in Jesus' name, as we prepared to go "outside the wire" on all night missions. I can't help but wonder, "what would those around me think if they were reading from the Quran, or the Satanic Bible?" Would there be outrage? I imagine so.... I would hope so.

Like a contemporary Paul Revere, Mikey's message serves as a clarion call for action! "No Snowflake in an Avalanche" is a must read for any and all officers who take seriously their oath to support and defend the constitution of the United States against ALL enemies, both foreign AND DOMESTIC!

Your brother in arms,

Eric



Dear Military Religious Freedom Foundation,



When I am able, I will contribute money. In the meantime, I value what you do and have made my ROTC son very aware of you.

Of course one of his interests is to avoid drawing attention to himself in a way that could hurt his career. But he still expresses outrage at things that are truly outrageous. In my opinion, this makes what you do particularly valuable: you can protest more visibly than he might. Yes, I'm praising you for being a pain in the ass to military command, more of a pain than a single soldier would dare.

(name withheld)



Dear Military Religious Freedom Foundation,

Thank you for all of your splendid work for D e m o c r a c y!!!

(name withheld)



Dear MRFF,

Before I received your e-mail, I wrote the following to Bill Moyers in the hope that he might address this on his program. Glad to hear that the Washington Post will publish something on it twice a month.

“The president extending apologies on the burning of the Korans is hypocritical. As commander-in-chief of the armed forces he should do something about Christian fundamentalists in the Air Force Academy usurping the Establishment Clause of the U.S. Constitution by proselytizing. When receiving the Giraffe award for one willing to stick one’s neck out for the common good, Mikey Weinstein of the Military Religious Freedom Foundation told of a soldier who had contacted him about how he befriended an Iraqi boy whose best friend had been blown up by a bomb and comfort him. A few days later he found him at the site of the bombing screaming. When he asked him what had happened, the boy handed him a leaflet. It showed Muslims burning in hell. When the soldier asked where he had gotten the leaflet, the boy pointed to the commander of the brigade. Mickey’s latest book, “No Snowflake in an Avalanche” reveals his work in not allowing the Constitution to be subverted, and the expense and toll taken on his family.

“It would be good if someone in media would help shed some light on what is happening. Mikey has been nominated four times, I believe, for the Nobel prize, but it appears to me that he is the only one waging a war against this despicable practice.

Respectfully,

(name withheld)



Hello Mikey,

I want you to know that I think you are a gift to the nation.

You work extremely hard with more grief than support and you keep at it, not just for Jews or, Muslims, you support EVERYBODY’S right to remain free from religious pressures and persecution in the military and I do believe they are starting to listen.

My only regret is that I cannot give you more than I do.

Thank you.

(name withheld)



Dear Mr. Weinstein!

I write this letter with outraged sadness that fine young men from United States serving their country should have been (hopefully) sufficiently ignorant of recent history to adopt the symbology of the German Nazi murderers as their own! I write this letter also as a longtime supporter of the Military Religious Freedom Foundation and, particularly, as a survivor of the Lodz ghetto, Auschwitz and Dachau concentration and extermination camps which murdered my parents, uncles cousins and friends, thus killing between 100 and 200 members of my extended family. I also write this letter as a U.S. Army mascot towards the end of World War II, and a veteran of the United States Air Force and the Colorado air National Guard.

The photographs below roil my intestines and break my heart beyond words to express! I wish I could really believe that these sniper teams innocently combined the view of the United States flag with the central symbol of the murderous SS! The use of the SS lightning bolts speaks for itself a sufficiently horrible tale.

I include some photographs below as context for those showing the US Marines stupidly and proudly displaying the symbols on the SS death machine operators!

Walter Plywaski, previously Wladyslaw Plywacki

Ex "native" of the Lodz ghetto, Auschwitz and Dachau

Colorado



Inside the Washington Beltway today, everyone thinks the budget is the primary issue for the military. It isn't.

Far more serious for the health of America's Armed Forces are two issues ripping at their very soul: sexual assault and the lack of religious freedom. Besides breaking the law, the first destroys irreparably the bond so important to military servicemembers; the second contains the potential to destroy the Constitution.

I joined the Advisory Board of the Military Religious Freedom Foundation to stand alongside Mikey Weinstein and do my part in preventing that destruction.

Lawrence Wilkerson, Former Chief of Staff to Sec. of State Colin Powell



It is my pleasure to join the Advisory Board of the Military Religious Freedom Foundation. By working to protect the essential liberty of belief within the uniformed services, this organization makes a patriotic contribution to our country's military. By advocating for the preservation of the separation of church and state on behalf of military men and women, the MRFF can be a voice for the most fundamental of American values. Patriotism is more than just flag-waving. It can mean fighting for the principles that make America great. It can call for sacrifice to insure that those principles are neither lost nor forgotten in the midst of conflict or chaos. It requires that we remain dedicated to the principles articulated in our Constitution and for which so many generations of Americans have given the last full measure of devotion. I look forward to assisting the important mission of the MRFF.

Ambassador & Fmr. Senator Carol Moseley-Braun



I am proud to join the Military Religious Freedom Foundation's Advisory Board and stand along Mikey Weinstein in the fight for separation of church and state in our United States armed forces.

As someone who has climbed Mt. Everest, I know how fierce mountains can be. One man alone, Mikey Weinstein, has moved governmental mountains when it comes to disallowing religious proselytization in the military.

Sometimes it takes nontraditional methods to achieve what's needed; I know that well from my decision to leave the Republican party and become the Libertarian Party's Presidential nominee in 2012. In MRFF's case, it's abundantly clear that the existing military chain of command has failed, and that's where MRFF and Mikey Weinstein applying external pressure to all levels of the military chain of command comes in.

It is truly an honor to join this worthy cause.

Gary Johnson

Former Governor, New Mexico

Libertarian Presidential Candidate, 2012



# Incidents

Dear Mr. Weinstein and MRFF:

I am absolutely worried about writing this to you, as I am terrified of the (military service branch withheld), but feel I have no choice. My husband is an honorable man, who I believe has been persecuted in the United States (military service branch withheld) for his refusal to cave in to the Evangelical agenda.

He is a (rank withheld), waiting for his retirement, that he won as a part of his Court Martial proceeding in (time frame withheld). Mikey, I have never seen anything like this. My husband has a (educational degree and discipline withheld), taught at (university name withheld) where we often bucked the system regarding the proselytizing and has had an honorable career (in the top 4% of rank withheld) in (military command name withheld) until a new command came in to (military installation name withheld) in (month and year withheld). Up until then he was considered to be an excellent candidate for (rank withheld) but we refused as he only wanted to retire and get away from the bible thumping.

This command is evangelical in nature-and they harassed me all the way through my husband's court proceeding. When the new command came in, my husband (raised Catholic and an agnostic now) found himself under investigation for (infraction withheld) and then they finally dug until they found (minor infraction name withheld) that were present and could not be denied. My husband, scared for his pension and his family, plead guilty to some of the charges leveled against him. Ultimately, (husband's name withheld) was given an honorable discharge and his pension.

Anyways, this commander of his called me often, telling me that "if you accept Jesus Christ as your savior, then things will go better for (husband's name withheld)." He went to the brig yes-the judge sent a (rank withheld) to the brig for 45 days)and then asked to pray over my husband, telling him if he just confessed his "sins" to "Jesus Christ" then he would find things getting better for him. Of course (husband's name withheld) gave his commander permission to pray over him as he was terrified to say no-because we believe

all of this stemmed from my husband's stance on the illegality of evangelical proselytizing in the (service branch name withheld).

So, now he was due to retire on (date withheld), but the (military branch name withheld) "cannot get his paperwork." I complained about this pressure put on us several times to the JAG, who has done nothing to my knowledge on our behalf. I believe they are being passive aggressive with the retirement because I complained about the harassment from my husband's commander who told me "call me even in the middle of the night, (wife's name withheld). I will pray with you, anywhere anytime. Jesus is your Lord, and we all soldier forth in his service."

I shudder to think of what they could do when they find out I wrote to you. I am a professional woman, an educated woman, and I know they could try to ruin me for speaking to you. I am crying writing this. I am scared of these people, and I know that they will try to do something else. I was told by my husband's commander that I should attend his church. I wonder if because we did not they are "punishing" my husband now by slow leaking his retirement. What does it mean "things will get better for your husband"? I appreciate your time sir.

With best regards,

(name and location withheld)



I am a practicing Jew and have an obvious Jewish last name. I was commissioned from a small Texas school in a small Texas town in 1962. I was thrust into the cauldron of subtle and occasionally blatant anti-semitism which permeated my Army at that time. I had fellow officers refused to interact with me, and found myself being ridiculed and oftentimes outright disobeyed with accompanying religious slurs. Although it did nothing to deter my Jewish identification and beliefs, it did affect my utility to the outfit mission. When

I complained to one of the superiors who seemed more "reasonable" to me, his comment was that I should change my last name!

I salute Mikey and his efforts on behalf of all victims of ethnocentrism. I am now 70 years old. Some of those memories still hurt.

Cordially,

(name withheld)



Dear MRFF,

I want to thank you for sticking up for the constitution in your mission statement. I am writing to inform you that my oldest son just graduated from boot camp at MCRD in San Diego on April 25th of this year. During the ceremony that is supposed to be free from religious coercion there was a prayer led by a chaplain and it was announced that the Marines "Spiritual Health" was one of the things that was worked on during the thirteen weeks of making my son a marine. My son is as gung-ho as any other marine out there and I do not believe that this blatant attempt to convert my son to the "Christian faith" will deter him, however it brings the question of what is the goal of the marines. Are they attempting to train "American" soldiers to defend the Constitution, or are the training "Christian" soldiers defending their "invisible man"?

Thank you for your time,

(name withheld)





Dear MRFF,

My report is a couple of years old now. Unfortunately, I was not aware of your organization when I went through the following ordeal. I was stationed in [ place and name withheld]. About a year after I was stationed there, I met and fell in love with my wife. Before I was granted permission from the Navy to marry my wife in Japan, at a Japanese municipal ceremony, I had to comply with [fleet name withheld] prerequisites (COMNAVFORJAPAN INST 1752.1Q). I could have ignored the prerequisites, but I would have been in violation of a direct order. In all fairness, the [fleet name withheld] instruction offered a couple different ways to fulfill the requirements. I could either wait for the marriage seminar classes offered on base once every six months or so (normally during my deployment). Or, I had the option of having three "pre marital counseling sessions" with the chaplain. Initially, I resisted the chaplain route because I am Atheist and I dislike the Chaplain Corps. However, after failed attempts to circumvent the requirement or get a seat in the seminar (which may also have been religious) I acquiesced. I requested that my chain of command waive my requirement, but they refused. The chaplain was a pleasant LT. I cannot remember his name, although I might still have the paperwork. I did what I normally do when I am faced with these situations, I simply said that I wasn't religious. I don't care to get into arguments over beliefs and saying, "not religious" does not stir the pot like telling them your are an Atheist. The chaplain was a polite and interesting man. As a leading petty officer, I have to offer to refer my airmen to the chaplain when I counsel them, so I tried to look at the situation as an inspection for my religious juniors. My wife was not required to attend but the chaplain inquired about my wife's religion and I told him that she was a Thai Buddhist. At my third and final meeting with chaplain, he gave me the letter that I needed to complete my marriage request package (at the time CAG5's request specifically required a chaplains letter), and he also gave my religious literature from his parent church in the States. Not wanting to be disrespectful, I did not complain. The chaplain then insisted that I pray with him. I politely declined, but he refused to take no for an answer. I just sat there quietly with my face turning red as he got on his knee and

began to pray... to... for... at.. me. I reported the incident to my chain of command when I returned. Several in my chain said that, "that's not right!" I did not pursue the matter and never heard from my chain, further regarding the matter. When I checked out of [withheld], I had my out brief with the Commanding Officer. He was not the CO at the time of the incident, but I told him that it had greatly offended me. He seemed very upset that the chaplain had behaved that way and assured me that he had not been informed of the incident prior to our conversation (he had been the XO when the incident occurred). I do not know what the present requirement is because I am no longer in Japan. I am attaching the instruction that I followed. Note paragraph 6-a-1. The requirement to see the chaplain is said to be optional. However, the chaplain can give counseling all of the time. The seminar was only available two times a year, usually during CAG5 deployments. Additionally, you have to consider the working requirements of a forward deployed squadron. Even if space was available in a seminar. I would not have been able to take the time from work to attend. The chaplain could schedule meetings around my work schedule. So, even though it is listed as optional, seeing the chaplain was in fact the only option I was afforded. If you have not been made aware of it yet, I will fill you in. The Navy gives the chaplains several hats to wear. In many instances, the only person a sailor can turn to for mental or emotional issues is a chaplain because they fill the void of a trained psychologist. I guess if god can't help you... no one can.

(name withheld)



Just wanted to tell you how much I admire what your organization is doing. I wish it had existed (or if it did, that I had known about it) during my years as an Air Force officer (dates withheld). In what should have been some of the best years of my life, I was routinely shunned and made to feel a pariah for no other reason than that I did not consider the bible to be a true story. I never tried to push my atheist beliefs on others,

never really cared what others thought. But because I answered honestly when someone directly asked me if I believed in evolution, I was made an outcast in a very closed community.

The military in the 90s (and I would guess still today), in particular the Air Force, had become a large scale Christian cult. Every meeting would begin with a Christian prayer. Every event that would happen was some sort of sign from Jesus, and it was up to us to interpret it somehow. I remember my general, a two star, discussing the "don't ask, don't tell" policy to the wing by holding up a bible and stating "THIS is my policy", to a rousing ovation.

Most of all I was concerned about the conception of Islam as an "evil" religion, and the idea that the US was a Christian nation in a holy war with Islam over the people of the middle east. I have no doubts whatsoever the influence this played on President Bush's decision to go to war with Iraq 7 years ago.

Anyways, I just wanted you to know how much I admire what you are doing. Eventually, common sense and reason always wins out.

Sincerely,

(name and rank withheld)



I am a Caucasian atheist who was born in St. Louis, Missouri in November 1963. I was raised as part of a normal American family with a mother, father, two year younger sister and dog. In 1969, we moved to a small town in Arkansas where I would spend the remainder of my childhood. My father was not particularly religious, but my mother was a practicing Pentecost who attended services on a weekly basis. My mother always took my sister and I to church on Sunday. I grew up observing, but mostly fearing Christianity in large part because of the screaming and wild behavior of the Pentecosts. In my late

teen years, I attended church with my grandmother instead who was a Missionary Baptist. At 17 years old, my grandmother demanded that I be baptized at her church and even though it wasn't something that I wanted, I relented so as not to offend my grandmother.

I graduated as valedictorian from high school and received a four year scholarship from the Air Force. Wanting to leave Arkansas, but not go too far, I chose to attend Memphis State University (now the University of Memphis) which was about 100 miles from where I grew up. I successfully completed four years and graduated in August 1986 with an electrical engineering degree and a 3.33 GPA. I entered active duty with the Air Force in October 1986.

After leaving Arkansas, I did not continue attending church and did not consider myself particularly religious. However, in my early Air Force years, I listed myself on forms as Christian and did still consider myself a Christian as a result of my upbringing. I spent four year at Kelly AFB in San Antonio, Texas followed by two years at Wright Patterson AFB, Ohio getting my masters degree at the Air Force Institute of Technology (AFIT). In my first two assignments, I really don't recall any religious related incidents in the workplace, however, I admittedly was not very observant during those years. In 1992, following my AFIT assignment, I was sent to Kirtland AFB, New Mexico. At some point in my three years there, I began realize that I was an agnostic and not Christian. I specifically remember questioning the appropriateness of daily Christian prayer meetings in the workplace. What I remember as most inappropriate was that they were reserving and tying up the only conference room for an office of almost 40 people for an hour per day. That was clearly a misuse of government resources, but it was allowed to continue for my entire three years there.

Following my tour at Kirtland, I had a two year tour at Patrick AFB, Florida followed by another three year tour back in the same office at Kirtland AFB, New Mexico. I married in 1995 while at Florida, but the marriage lasted for less than a year. Following my second tour at Kirtland AFB, I left military service for a year to pursue a job opportunity with a military contractor. It was an opportunity for me to work as a computer programmer which was something I enjoyed at the time and wasn't an option in the military. After one

year, as that job began to dry up, I received a call from the Air Force personnel center asking if I would consider coming back to active duty and I agreed.

My first assignment back on active duty was at Tinker AFB, Oklahoma in July 2001. In the years leading up to that assignment, I had begun actively studying history and religion and had transitioned from agnostic to atheist. Up to that point in my career, I had turned a blind eye and allowed myself to be fairly oblivious to the religious environment of the military. The assignment at Tinker was the first where I became observant and active. Early on in that assignment, my commanding officer asked my religious affiliation. I answered by saying that I was not religious and his response was "oh no, you're not one of those are you?" I replied "If you mean an atheist sir, yes I am." He then said "Well, I'll try not to hold that against you." He was a Christian who openly proselytized in the workplace. On one specific occasion at a promotion ceremony for a second lieutenant who was agnostic, He decided to make a speech how important it is to place Christianity first in your life. It was an extremely awkward speech at an awkward point in the promotion ceremony and the poor lieutenant could do nothing but stand and endure it. He commanded a division of over 100 people and frequently injected religion into his addresses to the division.

While at Tinker AFB, I began following a weekly article in the base newspaper called The Chaplain's Corner. It caught my eye because of one particular "fire and brimstone" article with the basic message that if you're not Christian, bad things will happen in your life. I found that article extremely inappropriate and a blatant case of proselytizing. I decided to look up the last couple of years of articles from the archives. Being that the chaplains represent all faiths, I hoped and expected that the articles would be simply "good morals" types of articles and that maybe the "fire and brimstone" article that had caught my eye was an exception. However, this was not the case. Of the articles that I reviewed, some were "good moral" articles, but the vast majority were Christian articles with many falling into the "fire and brimstone" proselytizing type. Further adding to my discontent was that every article prominently displayed a photograph of the article's author in full service dress uniform and standing in front of a US flag. The photographs were

absolutely unnecessary and added nothing to the content of the article. From my perspective, the only purpose of the served by displaying an officer in service with a US flag was to lend government support to the article. Based on the above reasons, I decided in 2004 to file an MEO complaint against the base newspaper and chaplains. The MEO officer that received my complaint was courteous and helpful and pledged to follow through with the case. However, after several weeks of no contact, I called only to find out that my case had been handed off to “higher headquarters.” Needless to say, I was swept under the rug and never contacted again even though in filing an MEO complaint I was supposedly guaranteed an answer.

Since I held the rank of major while serving at Tinker AFB, I was occasionally called upon to review and score applications for company grade officer of the quarter (second lieutenants, first lieutenants, and captains). The competitors were scored in four areas. Three of these areas were work related while the fourth was community involvement. The rationale for having a community involvement section is that “well- rounded” officers contribute both in the workplace and community. Officers that had been nominated by their commanding officer for officer of the quarter frequently had exemplary work records over the previous three months and frequently the deciding factor was the community involvement section. The community involvement section was notoriously hard to fill in and unfortunately came to serve as a church involvement section. So, as a result, religious officers had a distinct advantage over the non-religious and were almost exclusively chosen as officers of the quarter. I decided to file a complaint about the unfairness of the process through my chain of command. Knowing that my colonel was a devout Christian and fully supported the system as it stood, I decided to go up the chain of command to his boss. The next stop in the chain of command was another colonel and unfortunately another devout Christian who brought his religion to work. Based on my complaint, the colonel quickly surmised that I was an atheist and told me that “atheism is wrong.” He did not agree that the selection process was unfair and said that atheists could list “atheist events” in the community involvement section. I asked him if atheist events would be viewed in a positive light. He responded that they would not, but refused to relent that the

process was unfair. He finished our discussion by lecturing me about how our country was founded on Christianity and that God was written into the Constitution for a reason. At the time I left Tinker AFB, the process is still unchanged and decidedly in favor of religious officers.

On another occasion while at Tinker, it was the Christmas holiday season and the commanding officer had allowed all military personnel to choose either the week of Christmas or the week following Christmas and take a pass (free time off), except me. Even though I observe the Winter Solstice and enjoy the secular aspects of Christmas, it was one of his ways to punish me for being an atheist. I really didn't mind and bore it well except for one particular day. Although not a family man and living alone, I had a Yorkshire Terrier who had been my constant companion and best friend over the previous 13 years. However, his health was failing and one particular Friday morning it was so bad that I couldn't prolong putting him down any longer. It was the Friday before New Year's Eve and I was literally the only person working in the division. I worked the morning and accomplished my duties and then went in to ask my commanding officer for the afternoon off to put my dog down. I'll never forget the way he rolled his eyes and acted as if I had asked for something completely unreasonable. He eventually sighed and let me go, but I'll never forget the callous way he treated me on that day simply because I was an atheist.

Unfortunately for me, my opportunity for promotion to Lieutenant Colonel came while working for him. Officers are not supposed to write their own yearly performance reports or promotion forms. I wrote both for myself. Not being one to overly compliment myself, I wrote fact-based reports expecting him to change the wording into the exaggerated complimentary language expected on Air Force performance reports. However, he didn't and submitted the forms as I wrote them. It was his job to write my reports or take my inputs and improve upon them and he didn't. I had excellent work performance and rapport with my co-workers. His refusal to help me in the promotion process was religious discrimination and nothing more. When the two star general commanding officer at Tinker reviewed the promotion forms, colonels that submitted the forms were given an opportunity to make the case for their applicants. My colonel said

nothing. The general had an allotment of “definitely promote” ratings to hand out which ensured promotion. Even given no support from my colonel, the general decided that had she had one more definitely promote rating, she would have given it to me. She took it upon herself to re-write my promotion form and do all she could to help me, however, without the definitely promote rating, I was passed over for promotion. I was so close to being promoted that any help at all from my colonel would have been enough to get me over the hump. I lost my promotion because of religious discrimination which severely impacted my Air Force career. Majors who do not make promotion are given bad jobs at bad locations and are forced to retire at 20 years and that describes the end of my career. My last two years in the Washington DC area was uneventful although I did have another commanding officer that was openly Christian and openly contemptful that I was an atheist.

I recently read about the MRFF lawsuit and the Pentagon’s response that complaints of proselytizing are relatively rare and decided to send forward my story. It is my opinion that complaints are not rare, they are just ignored or buried. I don’t know what today’s opinion is in the Air Force, but I do know that in days gone by, the Air Force was known as a “good ole boys” club where the higher ranks were dominated by white male pilots. I think the racial and occupational discriminations have mostly been eliminated. However, with regards to religion the Air Force is very much still a “good ole boys” club. Christians have a distinct advantage in receiving awards and promotions. In my career, every lieutenant colonel and colonel that I worked for or closely with was a Christian. Some openly discriminated against non-Christians and others and a more subconscious level. And as I described above, even the system is set up to discriminate. It’s unfortunate that such discrimination is still allowed in today’s military.

(name withheld)





Dear Mr. Weinstein,

It was an honor and a privilege to speak with you on the phone today. As I explained during our conversation, my experiences with proselytizing directly from the military while my husband was stationed at the USAF Academy may have been relatively minimal, my passion and support for your organization stems from the experiences I had with the civilian population in Colorado Springs and the negative effect it had upon my children. The things I witnessed while living very near the Academy enabled me to grasp the depth and the seriousness of what the evangelical movement is attempting to accomplish within the military and the government as a whole. I feel it is important to emphasize that I am in no way against Christianity or any other religious doctrine. In fact, my grandfather was a Presbyterian minister and as I was growing up, my family was very active in our local Presbyterian church. I participated in the choir and the youth group at our church and believe those activities have positively impacted my life. The current evangelical movement that is currently sweeping this country seems to have very little in common with the things I was taught in the Presbyterian church which included concepts such as acceptance, tolerance, and the encouragement of free thinking. Obviously, many things have changed within the Christian community.

My family arrived in Colorado Springs during the summer of 2005. We were looking forward to moving there even though we were sad to leave the quaint lifestyle we had enjoyed while stationed at RAF Lakenheath in England. It was within the first week of our arrival in Colorado that I realized we had arrived in the fundamentalist capital of the United States. Besides the constant knocking on our door by people armed with their respective religious propaganda trying to recruit my family to join their cults of choice, it is how my children were treated at PUBLIC school by these fanatics that made my blood boil. After the article about your sons' experiences at the USAFA was published in the Colorado Springs Independent newspaper, I realized exactly how far these people were willing to go to influence the young cadets at the USAFA. I specifically remember that New Life Church regularly sent a bus to the Academy to transport the cadets to their "worship center". I

considered this a form of encouragement, if not an outright endorsement, of this particular church's brand of "Christianity". The thought that a government institution, particularly our armed services, could so blatantly defy the United States Constitution by supporting and encouraging participation in any religious organization thoroughly sickened and appalled me.

I would like to briefly share two events that profoundly affected my decision to move my children out of Colorado Springs after my husband elected to leave the USAF. My oldest daughter, at the age of 8, planned a slumber party for her birthday. Unfortunately, 3 of the 5 guests she invited were forbidden to attend because of the fact that our family did not attend church on Sundays. The other incident occurred after my 6 year old daughter had returned home following a play date with a little girl from her school. As we were eating dinner that evening, she suddenly burst into tears and very fearfully began to tell us how we are all going to be "devils" when we die because we don't go to church. It took me a certain period of time to convince her that that was simply not the case. My child reported to me that the family with whom she had spent the afternoon had discussed God and Jesus the entire time she was visiting their home. Needless to say, I was outraged. These two incidents certainly reinforced the notion that the evangelical movement has little or no respect for any agenda other than their own.

Although my direct experiences with the evangelical movement in Colorado Springs were on a civilian level, there is no question in my mind that these "Christian" organizations are attempting to influence and recruit young people in order to swell their influence and power over the political process in this country and in the military. I am aware that your and MRFF's necessarily furious fight for religious freedom in the military began prior to my arrival in Colorado and I believe that you, your family's and MRFF's many successes may well have shielded my family from being directly targeted by military personnel. However, it seems plausible that civilians were encouraged to approach us in an attempt to further their agenda by actively recruiting my family to join their ranks. What these organizations fail to realize is that their brand of fanaticism is directly in tune with the Taliban and the

jihadists they claim to abhor. I would savor any opportunity to help end their attempts to force their beliefs and practices on our military members and protect the Constitution.

Sincerely,

(name withheld)



To: the Military Religious Freedom Foundation:

I am a member of the faculty at the United States Air Force Academy and an officer in the United States Air Force. I am also a Protestant Christian. I would give more information about my personal history and the details which lead me to more general conclusions in order to further substantiate what I'm about to report, but I fear that doing so would make it easier for Academy authorities to determine my identity and severely punish me and my USAFA staff friends and family for speaking up. Many USAFA faculty, staff and cadets here live essentially in a "gulag-state" of abject fear of retribution and reprisal. Where faculty members at the nation's truly premier colleges and universities are protected by the tenets of academic freedom, publicly speaking about USAFA's institutionally-sanctioned, fundamentalist Christian oppression to anyone, particularly Mikey Weinstein and the Military Religious Freedom Foundation, violates the expectation that USAFA faculty and staff be blindly loyal to the institution. Nevertheless, I would like to add my voice to the growing chorus of those who will testify about the unbridled, overwhelmingly evangelical Christian environment at the Academy and how it directly and indirectly assaults basic constitutional and human rights on a daily basis.

We can start with the Officers Christian Fellowship (OCF). Their flyers are posted near the elevators regularly – once or twice a month – notifying the passing faculty and staff at the Air Force Academy of “brown bag” presentations sponsored by the OCF. Despite the fine print disclaimer, the lack of alternative presentations sends a clear

message: only those with an evangelical Christian agenda need give presentations here. A policy is in place that requires such event flyers be approved by full colonels before being posted, ostensibly to assure that any flyers that are posted are “professional in appearance.” Such a policy provides yet another layer of scrutiny by the institution. Is such a policy intended to give consent that the image on the OCF flyer was appropriate? Or that the topic was itself appropriate? If the topic is inappropriate, no problem; just come up with a “required attendance” meeting at the same time. Or, are the OCF flyers posted in order to send more covert messages? Clearly, the presentations imply that the Air Force Academy expects its faculty and staff to have the conservative, fundamentalist Christian perspective. Is someone keeping a mental list of who attends these meetings? To what ends?

Lest anyone reading this put forth their own pop psychology diagnosis of “paranoia,” consider the following:

- Instructors with one or more graduate degrees, including PhDs and MFAs, are reprimanded if, during the course of instruction, they happen to use one of those words forbidden by the FCC. Frankly, if one is discussing killing, or the possibility of being killed, there SHOULD be cuss words involved.
- Freethinking and inquisitive cadets wishing to engage in more secular intellectual discussion have been forced to learn to carefully and subtly probe their instructors’ religious proclivities, for fear of suffering retribution or proselytizing from evangelical faculty members.
- Cadets who are Mormon are permitted a two year hiatus in order to conduct their required missions. These are often some of the best cadets, since they generally have capability in other languages and some life experience to bring to the classroom. But is this special treatment? A parallel opportunity for other cadets in good standing who might want a break from the academy for any of a number of reasons, including religious ones – a program called “Stop Out” -- has been eliminated.

- Where past classes enjoyed beer at tailgate parties, and even attended mandatory “beer calls,” cadets may now be booted from the Air Force Academy (at taxpayer expense) for the Puritan sin of possessing alcohol in the trunk of their car in the cadet parking lot – even if they’re 21 years old. The result is off base weekend binge drinking that surely rivals any “party school” fraternity.
- “Intelligent Design,” which the courts have ruled to be creationism in disguise, is a highly respected “theory” in the Academy’s Science Division.
- Instructors engaging in mere discussion of the Don’t Ask Don’t Tell policy risk retribution, despite the fact that cadets, as future officers, will need to understand this policy – a policy that will likely meet its demise in the coming years.
- Cadets who are perceived to be gay are being harassed and assaulted yet feel they have no recourse, both because of the Don’t Ask Don’t Tell policy, and because of their perception that overwhelmingly Christian evangelical members of the leadership would have no sympathy for the treatment of a cadet they suspect is a homosexual.

As I recall, the Greatest Generation fought and won a war against fascists who started their reign of terror with censorship, involuntarily imposed their own ideology on the masses, and imprisoned, tortured and murdered homosexuals. Have we not come further as a people? Is this the best the Air Force has to offer? Shouldn’t the taxpayers demand more thoughtful, professional, and unbiased standards at service academies which are supposed to be institutions of “higher learning,” not institutions of “higher dogma”?

(name withheld)



Mr. Weinstein and MRFF, I refuse to be part of the problem anymore.

I am an active duty soldier, with a combat tour in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. I don't feel especially entitled to a hero's welcome or any special recognition at all. However, I feel like I do deserve some basic respect as a soldier, as a person, and as citizen of the United States. I'm not a religious man, though I have the same respect for other's beliefs as I do for my own (religious) parents. Unfortunately, this respect does not flow in both directions.

There have been countless times during my military career that I have been forced to endure the proselytizing of my evangelical Christian peers, and more often, my evangelical Christian superiors. Early in my career, I tested the waters with standing up for myself, and my non-belief. Every single time, I was met with either indirect retaliation, or direct punishment. As a young, junior enlisted soldier, husband, and father-to-be, I am financially strapped. This factor alone intimidates me enough to bite my tongue nearly every single time. Which makes me part of the problem. If nobody speaks out, nothing gets fixed. I didn't even realize there was a foundation that will speak out on my behalf until I read about the MRFF in a recent news story.

I could expound upon countless examples of instances where I shamefully caved to this intimidation, but I'll just touch on a few briefly for the sake of brevity. Across the board, all soldiers in Basic Training are given the option to attend religious worship services, with many denominations needing to be bused across post for their special needs to be met. These services serve as a 2-3 hour roundtrip of a break from the hectic and stressful training environment. Soldiers who were not religious are not forced to go to these services. However, I only fell for this trick once. If you choose to stay behind, you are not allowed to just rest or even sit down. You have to clean up the entire barracks for the entire time that everyone else is off at worship services. Due to a line of duty injury, I was forced to endure the basic training environment for over 30 weeks (instead of 9 weeks). That was 30 weeks of fire and brimstone speeches that seemed to be more and more offensive every sermon. From what I can tell, this form of discrimination and punishment is still the SOP.

In the recent past, I was approached by a Chaplain who saw me reading a book about biology. He left a note inside the book that denounced the book as 'full of the lies of evolution' and 'do you really believe this stuff? I hope not'. Please keep in mind, Mr. Weinstein, that this guy was an OFFICER and, thus, he greatly outranked me. He signed his name and rank, and offered to 'counsel me' on these matters. I was shocked at this, but I couldn't help but try to handle the problem tactfully myself, and I explained to him that I was extremely open minded and that I wanted to talk to him about this, but only if he would approach the conversation with an open mind as well. We talked about evolution only briefly, and of course it was full of the typical creationist shtick I half-expected from him. But it quickly got... weird. He asked me things like "Are you happy with your life the way that you live it?" I responded "Yes. I love my life. I mean I have a little trouble sleeping, but that's why I love science and medicine!" He abruptly changed his tone, and said "You know that the medicine doesn't help you at all. I am very worried about your spiritual well being now... You see, I am from Haiti, and I used to practice voodoo before I found the Lord, Jesus Christ. I can tell that you have demons inside you that might be from a curse, or from witchcraft. THAT'S what is keeping you up late."

I was floored. It didn't stop there, though. He continued to say bizarre things and use obscure biblical passages to 'prove that he was right' about the bizarre thing he just said. Three hours went by, and I was given two books to learn from, both from Bob Jones University Press. One was called "The 8 signs that you are possessed by demons" or something very similar, which he assured me would save my life. Next he offered to take me out to lunch, and even coaxed me into 'giving him an open minded chance at his church service'. That was a huge mistake. Halfway through the sermon he asked the audience to "Raise your hand if you are struggling through a tough spot" A few hands went up. "Raise your hand if you have trouble sleeping at night." I raised my hand. "Now I want all of the people who have their hands raised to come up to the front." I obliged. "Now kneel and repeat after me... I accept you, Jesus Christ, as my Lord and Savior..." Can you believe that? He tricked me. I was mortified. I told people in my chain of command about the incident. Nobody recommended any course of action at all. Nobody

helped me. I was completely alone and abandoned. I was just forced to let it go. And I did so, with great shame and humiliation, a feeling I will never, ever be able to forget.

Had I only known about the existence of the MRFF, I would have had someone with the raw power, courage and resources to back me up. The U.S. Army chain of command and their 'EO policies' or Inspector General complaint channels completely fail to counter the pervasive proselytizing of the overwhelmingly evangelical fundamentalist Christian chaplaincy and officer/NCO corps. It is regretful that to investigate this so many years after the fact would be a logistical impossibility. However, I am proud to say that if the same thing happened again today, I know full well that I would have the wonderful support of the MRFF. MRFF is the only true friend a soldier has when confronted with this overwhelming proselytizing madness. They will defend the United States constitution, the Treaty of Tripoli, and the many other legal documents set in place by our forefathers. These are the things that I swore an oath to fight to protect. Only the MRFF seems to fight for me.(Out of fear of retribution, please redact my personal information for any external purposes)



Greetings.

Please pass along my heartfelt thanks to the Founder and President of the Military Religious Freedom Foundation, Michael L. "Mikey" Weinstein for standing up for what is right.

I spent twenty years on Active Duty in The United States Army and I was forced to attend military functions over and over again where I had to listen to them give official Benedictions and Invocations taking about their lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I complained over and over again to no avail. I always attempted to talk to the Chaplain and ask that they not do this and I was continually ignored over the years.



Now, I fight a constant battle with all the Veterans Organizations that I participate in to keep their religious beliefs and practices out of these organizations. Here again they hold meetings and meals and continue the same sort of thing that I had to endure in the Military.

- W. H.

US Army Retired

Life Member of: the Disabled American Veterans (DAV),

The Retired Enlisted Association (TREA), The Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW),

The Noncommissioned Officers Association (NCOA),

American Veteran Association (AMVETS) &The Korean War Veterans Association

And a current member of the American Legion.



To Whom it May Concern;

My name is (name withheld), I am a (rank withheld) with the US Army entering into my 6th year in the military in Feb of next year.

In my time in the military I have been witness to several cases of outright discrimination against non-christian, non-fundamentalist service members. This includes but is not limited to Muslim, Jewish, Pagan, Atheist, Hindu, Voudoun, Secular Humanists, Buddhists, Catholics, and many other faiths. I have discovered a pervasive movement among Chaplains, leadership, and even governmental heads of state toward the majority held religious Fundamentalist Right. I speak specifically of Baptist Fundamentalist, Southern Baptist, and the Protestant faith. I have stood in formation after formation before a Command Chaplain of at least Captain rank making prayer after prayer. My former command had a policy of the Chaplain giving a prayer at the morning Monday formation

each week. This prayer was rarely of any faith other than Protestant/Baptist motivation, and was only changed to the occasional verbiage of a more tolerant kind when multiple complaints were filed via the Army EO policy against various members of the Command.

I have seen soldiers who regularly shirk work called "Good Soldiers" before a mandatory end of day formation due to they're newly found attendance of Protestant services at the chapel by they're platoon SGT. I have seen a Jewish soldier REGULARLY have to remind his command of his religious commitments during the week, and the fact that he had to travel over 45 minutes via train to receive religious service in our area, and even then it was from a Civilian service.

I have been told BY a Chaplain that my marriage could never succeed because we did not have Christ in our hearts.

I have been told use of the Chapel, and Chapel grounds was restricted from my religion because it was "hallowed ground" and would upset the majority. I was also told in that meeting that without a Distinctive Faith Group Leader, I was not allowed to practice my religion on a US Military post. I was given the process for DFGL status, but it's restrictions call for an organized, hierarchical structure to be recognized as a DFGL, something that even the Military Chaplain's Handbook recognizes my religion does not suffer from.

I have had bible verses, specifically "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." (Exodus 22:18), shoved under the door of my housing.

I have seen Non-christian members of a unit be singled out for duty in more hazardous conditions on deployment to Iraq. (This was redacted by command and called a coincidence after an Equal Opportunity complaint was filed).

I have seen subjects of an EO complaint remain in command of, and regain command of in some cases, soldiers who publicly filed they're complaint. Said soldiers were often subject to retribution for the EO complaint, in direct violation of current army Whistle Blower policies.

This is a pervasive, and systematic infiltration of an organized religion into the largest military industrial complex in the world. I believe that it is a prelude to and currently stands as a religious War against non-believers. This is currently most noticeable for Muslim service members, who are viewed with various levels of suspicion and hostility by nearly all Service Members. This is a pervasive attitude subtly encouraged by both evangelical service members, and ComSec policies and briefings. We are taught to be suspicious of anyone with a foreign, middle eastern, accent, or appearance. Advised to avoid Indian, and Middle Eastern restaurants and cultural center, as well as cautioned of true ComSec issues and policies.

Caricatures of Muslim, or "insurgent" members of enemy forces is common artwork in deployed areas. The belief that President Barrack Obama is a member of the Muslim faith, a fact that has been repeatedly repudiated, is publicly discussed in military environments. Former Governor of Alaska, former Vice presidential Candidate, Sarah Palin, publicly endorsed a religious leader who's impassioned speeches in South Africa lead to the stoning and death of at least three individuals for "Witchcraft."

We have at my new post, a regular weekly meeting of my particular religious group, thanks in no small part to the Sacred Well Congregation's organizational skill at getting individuals a DFGL status with the Chaplaincy. I am grateful for this, as it is the first time since Iraq that I have seen a regular meeting of Pagan soldiers in the military.

A few statistics for you gathered by a military Pagan:

- Roughly half of the military members who claim Pagan or Wicca as religion have decided to remain "in the Broom Closet" as a response to perceived religious intolerance. This is recognized by the Military Chaplain Handbook in the line, "Concealment is a traditional Wiccan defense against persecution, so non-denominational dogtags should not contravene a member's request for religious services."
- Military Pagans/Wiccans have NO CHAPLAIN representation. This is in spite of an unknown number of Wiccan, and Pagan soldiers in the military. This is in spite of

the 13% of our population KNOWN to have military records stating our religious affiliation. Keeping in mind the tendency of Pagan and Wiccan soldiers to Conceal they're faith, the numbers should be increased possibly as much as 12%. Compare this to the 1500 self recognized Jewish soldiers in the military, a religious group I mention due to they're numbers, and the fact that they have Chaplain representation.

- The number of Pagan and Wiccan peoples in the US is growing exponentially. Estimated at a population of 768000 in 2000, with approximately 51% registered to vote.
- The average Pagan or Wiccan in America today can lose their children, or their job due to a discriminating judge, or boss. Rarely is anything done to prevent such abuses of power. Such societal impacts are often magnified in the military and require redress. Policy requires days off during the month of December for all students in a TRADOC posting. This is referred to as "Christmas Exodus." However Pagan/Wiccan students in that same TRADOC environment are often simply out of luck on receiving time off for they're religious holidays and observances unless they happen to fall in a similar time frame to a Christian celebration.
- Current Supreme Court policy is described in Wisconsin v. Yoder (1972), the Court ruled that a law that "unduly burdens the practice of religion" without a compelling interest, even though it might be "neutral on its face," would be unconstitutional. With this in mind I point out the lack of effort put forth by the military, and even effort contrary to, the establishment of Pagan/Wiccan Chaplains, the seemingly intentional disinterest of current Chaplaincy, and outright proselytizing of the Chaplaincy seems to be in direct contradiction of this policy, and the well being of soldiers within the purview and responsibility of those Chaplains.

In closing I would like to say your organization is doing a fine job in defending the rights of soldiers, airmen, marines, and navy service members, however I feel that a more

persuasive, and public attitude must be taken. Our Founding Fathers created this country with a specific idea in mind, that is obvious from they're inclusion of the this line from the Constitution of the United States of America, ""Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof ..."" This has often been translated correctly into a policy of a Separation of Church and State. Current statutes and policies within today's military violate that Separation, and damage the morale, and well being of Non-Christian soldiers.

The spread of pervasive Christian thought within the military must be brought to a stop before it comes home to roost in our own backyard. Historical context tells us that if a military force becomes pervasively cognizant to a single thought or idea, that thought or idea will be eventually forced on the populace of the country, either via physical conflict, or through the use of patriotic fervor. We cannot allow the attitudes of the majority, outweigh the rights of the minority... Thank you for doing all that you have done, do not give up, and please help support our bid to receive guidance from our own Pagan/Wiccan Chaplain.

Sincerely,

(name withheld)



To Mikey Weinstein and The Military Religious Freedom Foundation (MRFF)

I currently work as a civilian federal employee for the United States Army at (location withheld). I've been employed as a civilian government employee for nearly (number of years withheld). My statement below is offered to MRFF because it is the only place I feel safe in expressing such outrage. It is useless and dangerous to officially express such feelings of religious oppression and intolerance via "normal" Army channels such as the Inspector General, the EEO office, the JAG office and , especially, the chain of command

as both aggressive, direct and indirect retribution and reprisal will most assuredly be the immediate result for the complainant. MRFF stands quite alone as the only established "safe" refuge to register and report such unconstitutional violations by the armed forces. Actions speak louder than words. Thus, it is only MRFF which ever takes swift action against those violating the Constitution by unlawfully promoting their religious worldviews to fellow military members and personnel in the workplace.

On my first day reporting for duty, I was required to take an oath to defend the United States Constitution against all enemies, both foreign and domestic. Despite being a Christian at the time, I was not required to place my hand on a Bible to fulfill this oath, nor was I required to place my hand on a Qur'an, a Book of Mormon, or any other religious text. However, over the course of my nearly ten year commitment to federal service, it has become apparent that evangelical, fundamentalist Protestant Christianity appears to be the generally accepted and sponsored religion of the U.S. Army here at Redstone Arsenal, Alabama. My guess is that it is also the generally accepted and sponsored religion throughout all U.S. federal branches of service across the country and worldwide.

When I first began working for the Army as a civilian, I was a committed Christian who kept a Bible at his desk for reflection and study during lunch and break time. I was raised by Christian parents, though they were not very religious and never tried to push religion upon me. Nonetheless, it was the religion I was familiar with, and growing up in the Bible Belt, it was the religion of most people I knew. As a result, I eventually was baptized while attending a United Methodist church service. After that day, a fire burned inside of me to seek God and follow his son, Jesus, with all my heart, mind, body, and soul. This led me to becoming an astute student of the Bible and religion, a passion I continue to this day.

Interestingly, when I would read my Bible as a new Christian working for the federal government, I would often have people see me reading and ask me questions such as, "Where do you go to Church," "what scripture are you reading," etc. etc. Such questions are common in Alabama, where churches abound and occupy a lot of land, with various denominational churches and worship centers being erected side-by-side. I'm sure that I,

too, was guilty of asking people such questions from time to time. For me, their answer is where I ended the conversation. I can't recall ever following the question up with, "So, were you baptized by full immersion, or were you sprinkled over the head with water?"; "Do you believe the Bible is inerrant?"; "Do you believe Jesus and God are equal?"; etc. etc. As a new Christian, I never realized that such questions were that important. Apparently, as I would learn, they were rather important to Christians. In fact, so much so that some Christians refused to acknowledge that other self-professing Christians were actually "Christians" unless they held to certain specific Christian tenants.

As a young student of the Bible, I was always eager to learn anything and everything I could about the Bible. My hope was to know the Bible inside and out, in hopes that it would strengthen my relationship with God. And as I'm sure every student desires, I wanted to know and understand the Bible as God had intended it. So whenever a co-worker of mine would ask me where I went to church, followed up by more theologically motivated questions, I was always willing to answer and discuss various issues that would arise from the conversations. From these conversations, I learned just how differently Christians believed one from another, depending on what denomination they were a member of. It also became apparent to me that my salvation was on the line with every answer I gave to these probing questions. At the time, it didn't bother me that these things were being asked of me in a work setting, much less a federal work setting, since I wasn't very educated as to the legal and/or social implications involved. My only concern was my relationship with God, and ensuring that I was in right standing with him. While most of my co-workers never went past the curiosity of knowing where I went to church, or what my favorite passage was, a few of them had other motives. Primarily, convincing me that their interpretation of the Bible was the correct interpretation.

One person I worked with in particular was always good at asking me the tough questions, and always expected my answers to be supported by the Bible. He was so good, in fact, at asking these questions that he eventually convinced me that I was going to end up in hell for holding false beliefs and not acting in accordance with certain instructions that God expected all "true Christians" to follow. This guy was well versed in

his Church of Christ beliefs. So when he found out that I had not been baptized by full immersion, he quickly pointed out to me that the Bible specifically stipulated that all Christians were to be baptized by full immersion, and that this baptism must be so that their sins "could be" forgiven, and not because they "already had been" forgiven, or as just some kind of symbolic expression of faith. I personally didn't accept his position, initially anyway, since I was always taught that simply having faith in Jesus was good enough for me to be saved. And seeing as I believed in a literal hell, with fire and all the torment that comes with it, I wasn't willing to accept that I was going to hell, especially when I loved Jesus and believed in God with all my heart. However, as I continued to read the Bible and prayed for God's Holy Spirit to provide me with his truth and wisdom, and as I continued to be enamored by my co-worker with his own scriptural support of his position, I felt that God's truth and my co-worker's position were aligned.

As a result, I went to work one day and told my co-worker that I wanted to be baptized by full immersion so that my sins could be forgiven, and so that I would be saved from eternal damnation in hell. And as Phillip compelled the Ethiopian eunuch to immediately be baptized as they came upon water, so too my fellow co-worker compelled me to go and immediately be baptized that very day. Since it was always possible, as he told me, that I could go out and get hit by a car, thus dying without having my sins forgiven. So he rushed me to his church to meet with his pastor, who talked to me for about 30 minutes to be sure that I was asking to be baptized for the right reasons. Once he was convinced that I was doing it for the right reasons, there was no reason to stop me from being immediately baptized. Not even the fact that the heater on his baptismal tank had went out, and the water was ice cold, considering it was the middle of winter. Being that I was convinced this was God's purpose for me, I simply viewed that moment as a test of faith by God (though others could have well viewed it as God telling me not to join a false church). His way of seeing if I was one of his true sheep, and whether or not I was willing to truly follow him no matter what the conditions.

So, I changed out of my work clothes and into a garment that I was provided for the baptism, and then climbed into the freezing cold water. The pastor climbed into the



cold water as well, except that he was wearing a wet suit to help keep him warm. Nonetheless, I was immersed a sinner and raised a "true Christian." Or as my co-worker and his pastor referred to me, a "brother."

Over the course of the next few years, I would continue to seek God's truth by studying the Bible. While I initially remained a fellow "brother" to my co-worker, I would eventually disfellowship myself from the Church of Christ and its teachings. For as the more I studied, the more I began to realize that other Christians no more had the right understanding or way to the "truth" than I did. Especially when the leaders of churches, i.e. ministers, pastors, etc., as well as fellow Christians, were unable to provide me sufficient answers to the tough questions that began to bother me since I had become a Christian--whether I was a "Christian" the first time I was baptized or officially became one after the second time I was baptized. I eventually reached the point that I no longer attached myself to any denomination or way of thinking, and instead was an independent thinker who became less and less religious.

The religious tale-spin that was instigated from my working with a few overzealous people caused me a lot of despair and agony with regards to my relationship with God. At the same time, it made me more conscious of religious differences between people of all faiths, and also those who have no faith at all. It also made me realize that instigating religious discussions with people in a work environment, or celebrating your own personal religious convictions at the expense of others, is inappropriate and detrimental to a unified workforce.

Today, it is my belief that religion is a personal matter. And while it is okay for people to willingly engage one another concerning their differences of religious faiths, beliefs and practices, it should not be the case that individuals feel pressure by co-workers, or their organization, to uphold faiths, beliefs, or practices that run counter to each person's own personal conscious.

Yet my own personal experiences while working for the United States Army as a civilian employee have taught me that religion is, in fact, too much a part of both individual practice, as well as organizational practice. As I became less religious, I would still have

co-workers ask me if I attended church. And if I told them that I no longer went to church, I would often arrive at my desk to find books in my chair meant to provide me spiritual guidance. To me, this is inappropriate. It's inappropriate whether it's a Muslim leaving a Qur'an in my chair, or an atheist leaving me a book telling me the reasons I shouldn't believe in God; and it is also wrong when, as it has in every case concerning me, an evangelical, fundamentalist Christian leaves me a book of prayer, or a book on the resurrection of Jesus in hopes that I will follow God as they believe I should. Just as it is wrong when I walk down the halls of my office to see people posting internet articles outside their doors on the reasons why we know the second coming of Jesus is at hand, and what the tribulation will be like for those who are not raptured. Or when co-workers feel compelled to send me unsolicited emails about the "godless" people who feel it is wrong to attempt to remove "Under God" from the pledge of allegiance.

Surely I have co-workers who are not just evangelical, fundamentalist Christians, but are also Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, and even agnostic or atheist. Yet whenever we have Thanksgiving or Christmas luncheons, the food is always blessed with, not just a prayer, but a prayer in Jesus' name. In fact, this has become so common at the luncheons and parties sponsored by both my parent organization, as well as the organization where I have been assigned, that I have quit attending them altogether. This, of course, always raises the question as to why I don't attend the Thanksgiving or Christmas luncheons/parties. Of course it's not because I'm anti-social, since I'm very outgoing, funny, and well liked by every person I work with. I'm viewed as a great, hard-working employee. However, when it comes to Thanksgiving and Christmas luncheons/parties, I tend to find ways to avoid them. The excuse I always use is, "the tickets cost too much." And while that is partly true, the main reason is because I find it highly inappropriate to bless the food with a prayer, especially when the prayer \*always\* ends with, "In Jesus' name, amen," and for the parties to be exclusively Christian centered when it comes to songs and celebration.

Such prayers and activities may be enjoyed by the Christians who attend, but they can be highly offensive and exclusive of other employees, who should not feel like they are

at a Christian worship service. Such gatherings are not representative of the employees who are Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish, agnostic, or atheist. They are not representative of each and every American citizen who took the very same oath to uphold and protect the United States Constitution. In fact, each and every time a prayer is uttered at a government sponsored event, the Constitution is being violated, not upheld. And the individual rights of each and every American who swore to uphold and protect the Constitution as a federal employee are being violated.

I will not be attending the two Christmas parties this year being sponsored by the two government organizations that I work for, just as I have not attended them for the past 4 or 5 years. Not only because each party costs between \$20-22 per ticket, but also because of past experiences I've had while attending these organizational Christmas parties. For one, past experience tells me that more prayer will be taking place at these parties than if I decided to go to church on a Sunday. And secondly, despite the fact that I don't attend church on Sundays, or any other day---unless I'm there to play basketball---one of these Christmas parties will be taking place in a church; a United Methodist Church to be exact. So, should I choose to go to this particular Christmas party, not only would I have to hear prayers in the name of Jesus, I would have to hear them in a house of worship dedicated to Jesus. No offense to Jesus or his followers, but I don't go to church to pray in Jesus' name during my free time, when going to church is free of charge, much less am I going to pay \$22 to go to church for a Christmas party being sponsored by the federal organization I work for to hear those very same prayers that I could hear for free on Sundays.

While not many people speak out against such federally organized holiday parties, I know for a fact that I am not the only person who is employed by the military, whether soldier or civilian, who feels the way that I do. I have co-workers who have expressed concern over such organizational parties, and I know of people who work for the government in other locations who have also expressed similar experiences.

I'm certainly not opposed to such activities, since I often enjoy the organizational picnics and outings that are put together, which I generally attend. The difference is that

these events aren't as filled with religious expression, though there generally is a blessing of the food in Jesus' name. And while I would like to attend this year's Christmas party, along with my wife and two kids, since we too celebrate Christmas, I again will have to skip it and come up with a good excuse for why I am doing so, since the truth often has harsh repercussions in a world dominated by zealous Christians who can't imagine anyone not celebrating Christmas without it being all about Jesus. And while many others who may be opposed to the overwhelming Christian nature these parties often take, yet attend anyway, I will be sitting it out for them as well.

It would be nice if, along with annual security awareness trainings, sexual harrassment trainings, ethics trainings, substance abuse trainings, suicide prevention trainings, etc., we could have a religious tolerance training as well. While the government spends a lot of time and effort making us all conscious of security, ethics, sexual harrassment, and substance abuse, it does very little to make sure its workforce is tolerant of religious freedom, which includes being free of religious practices and beliefs being forced upon us, especially when it is discriminatory and prevents all federal employees from enjoying government sponsored events.

Hopefully, one day I can return to celebrating the holidays with my fellow co-workers at our annual Thanksgiving and Christmas parties. But I won't be doing that until the parties are religiously neutral, so that military and civilian employees of all faiths and non-faiths feel welcomed.

Thank you MRFF for being the ONLY safe "Welcome Wagon" we have for those of us who wish to try to fight this evangelical, fundamentalist Christian bigotry in the U.S. military.

Respectfully,

(name withheld)



I wish I could be present in person, to tell you my story, and the story of Mikey Weinstein and the MRFF. Before getting started, though, let's all of us bow our heads...  
<5 SECOND PAUSE>

Did any of you feel uncomfortable, just now? How about a little helpless, but too self-conscious to leave? Can you appreciate the subtly coercive order to pray? How about the bait and switch? Too many of our brave military members, veterans, and civilian contractors are going through the same thing and worse. Reports are coming in, of experiences from humiliation to physical injuries to stress intended to coerce or cause heart attack and suicide. Soldiers who don't comply with the religious directives of their chain of command may be ordered to take point, day after day, absorbing all the risk of being the first to encounter an IED. Others are told to pick pubic hairs off the bathroom floor with a tweezer for weeks at a time. Still others find themselves turning a blind eye on the battlefield, while "good Christian soldiers" play convert or kill with real life locals in Iraq and Afghanistan.

If all this is news to you, peruse the website of The Military Religious Freedom Foundation. Read anything recent by Jeff Sharlett. See the movie Constantine's Sword. Catch the play ... Read Mikey's own book, ... But first, sit back and listen to Mikey Weinstein. He's the world's expert. I met Mikey a year or two after I was ousted from the USAF for not fitting my hospital commander's religious worldview. He busily decorated his new command with nothing but nativity scenes, the winter before I arrived at Andrews AFB. I heard about it in April. This was my first assignment, and I was surprised. You see, in Commissioned Officer Training class, we had one chaplain candidate who blew the opportunity to give invocations by ending his first with "in Jesus Christ's name, amen."

Maybe I just got lucky, there. You see, we had quite a few lawyers in the class, including a pagan whose wife is a wiccan. I had no such protection at Andrews – regardless of the fact, or worse, because of the fact, that this was where the President parks his plane. President Bush set the tone, and public displays of affection – toward

Jesus and Christianity and every opportunity to pipe up about it – were the offerings of the day.

That year, Christmas fairly coincided with the start of Chanukah. President Bush planned to light a menorah next to the Christmas tree. It was three months after Yom Kippur, the single most significant day in the Jewish calendar, a day of fasting and praying for forgiveness. It was exactly the same amount of time since the spectacular Air Force Ball at Andrews AFB. Apparently, no Jews need attend the Ball. Attendance at the tree lighting, though, would allow for further evangelizing. I was named Jewish Lay Leader just in time to ready preparations. I was separated from the USAF right after, on trumped up grounds, in a way that is impossible to prevent. I was also fired as lay leader, despite or because of shockingly high approval ratings from enlisted and officers, military and civilians alike. Notice that one need have no military connection or background at all, to be a religious lay leader. It was not necessary to terminate me from that position, just because I was leaving active duty.

It was a year or two later, right after Mikey Weinstein founded the MRFF, that I heard of him. Reading what I could find, and then speaking with him on the phone, I came to realize I'd been in denial about the connection between my religion and the truncated one year experience I had in the USAF.

My commander must have realized he could never convert me. Turns out, he deliberately put me in the high risk category for suicide – and avoided any intervention to prevent it – right before ousting me. Of course, he'd have had to do paperwork, if I committed suicide while on active duty.

Mikey was a well-to-do lawyer/businessman, while this was going on. He'd graduated with honors at the United States Air Force Academy and married Bonnie just before graduation. He trained as a lawyer, practiced in the Air Force for ten years, worked for President Reagan in the White House, and then made his money working for Ross Perot and with many others. Those days are gone now.

Mikey exhausted the lion's share of his assets defending us, all in barely four short years. You see, Mikey's sons and daughter-in-law followed in his military academy footsteps, just as he had followed his own father. Mikey's sons were victims of vicious anti-Semitic attacks at the Academy, just as Mikey had been. Even his daughter-in-law felt the sting of religious oppression. There was a difference, this time, though, and Mikey was sharp enough to quickly pick up on it. Now, the behavior was institutionalized, coming down the chain of command from the very top at the United States Air Force Academy. He couldn't imagine, until it smacked him in the face, that it could extend beyond Colorado Springs, either. Now, he knows.

Now, there is undeniable evidence proving it exists at military bases all around the world, even on the battlefield, especially on the battlefield, and the targets are not only Jews. The targets of this wave of religious exceptionalism in the United States military include everyone, military member, civilian contractor, even local populations in the theatre of war. Perhaps the most vulnerable, though, are our own military members, because each is under the absolute control of his or her chain of command, where self defense is virtually impossible, and where, as it turns out, governmental defense doesn't exist. I know. I approached the MEO (military for EEOC) and Inspector General offices and was turned away, just as my career was being set up for destruction and I was being deliberately set up for suicide. Fortunately for me, my chain of command wasn't aware of the strength of my survival instinct.

So, Mikey's working in a corporate environment, making the big bucks, when the reality of this subversive, fundamentalist Christian, military culture smacks him in the face, by targeting his Jewish military kids, including his Christian military daughter-in-law. He refuses to assess the situation as a misunderstanding, because it isn't, nor as an isolated situation because, hey, it's not that, either. And then, he realizes, just enough, what he's up against. He quits the fine, secure job, sets up the Military Religious Freedom Foundation, starts getting the word out, all the while protecting his sons and daughter-in-law the best he can.

And then, the tsunami starts to build. First, there are a few brave souls who call to report their tyrannical experiences, and shockingly enough, almost all of them begging for Mikey's help are Christian! They've been deemed "not Christian enough" by the convert-or-kill extremists we've come to know as evangelical, fundamentalist "Dominionist" Christians. Google it! Believe me, there is a much longer, more precise name, but it won't fit in this paper.

Next, Mikey and Bonnie and their family members experience threats. From phone calls with children singing a death chant, to cross and swastika painted on their house, to windows being shot out in their home to "imprecatory prayers" from fundamentalist Christians asking Jesus to kill Mikey and his family and the following ten generations of his descendants, Mikey found himself having to spend a good bit more for security than the average American citizen. Taxes, apparently, don't cover enough for the FBI to take action against such hate crimes – at least, not in his case. He's up against the really big boys.

So far, Mikey has received over 15,300 phone calls, emails, letters, and other complaints from military members and veterans (96% of whom are from Christians!) who suffered religious intolerance and abuse ranging from intimidation to physical injuries and near death experiences. Some of those near death experiences would likely have resulted in death, had Mikey not personally, immediately, and forcefully intervened.

How does he do it? When Mikey finds out someone has been harmed or put at grave risk, he gets the service member's commander on the phone. That's going straight to the top. With the Constitution as his legal weapon, he issues such a challenge that things happen. He's learned the results are good for only a few weeks at best, though, so he goes next to the media. Getting the story out to the public can cause longer lasting protection for the service member. Finally, if the service member wishes, Mikey looks into legal action. Right now, he and MRFF have joined a decorated Army combat medic in a lawsuit against the DoD and Secretary of Defense Gates, himself. Mikey can't be intimidated. Others have noticed; many others. In mid-October, 2009, the Military Religious Freedom Foundation received a cherished nomination for the 2010 Nobel Peace



Prize. Last year (2009) saw the most ever Nobel Peace Prize nominations. Only 33 organizations and 172 individuals (one of whom was Obama) worldwide received such an honor.

Mikey's also recognized a hierarchy of unwantededs, in this fundamentalist Christian Dominionist's military: Faith is a "sacred cow", so atheists and agnostics rank even lower than Jews. Secularism, especially rational secularism, is being rooted out and replaced with beliefism. After all, once someone concedes to believe in that which can't rationally be proven, those beliefs have a chance to be manipulated.

Follow MRFF, if you want to learn more. Mikey's money ran out a long time ago. Danger awaits more military members, unless you help. Please, support your Constitution. Support the United States of America. And, do it by supporting those who risk their lives to protect us; our servicewomen and men. Protect them by supporting the Military Religious Freedom Foundation. There is much you can do. Learn more. Spread the word. And give what you can and please give it fast. Mikey will tell you more.

Former USAF Officer and Jewish Physician



Dear Mr. Weinstein,

I contacted you last year about ongoing gender and religious discrimination in my Navy jet squadron, and I wanted to update you with what ended up happening. After speaking with you, I decided to try to diffuse the situation by myself in an attempt not to draw attention to myself or receive backlash from my chain of command. Unfortunately, my attempts failed miserably, and after 13 months of terrible treatment, I was involuntarily separated from active duty. I was essentially bullied out of the Navy.

I completed Aviation Preflight Indoctrination and Primary Flight Training with flying colors. I was selected for my top choice out of Primary—I was one of the lucky few who would get to fly jets.

I reported to jet training in (date withheld), and started getting bullied about being female right away. On the first day of ground school, after congratulating our entire class about getting jets, our instructor asked me how I got there (I was the only female out of the ten students in the class). I sarcastically told him that I obviously fucked my way to jets because I couldn't possibly be as competent as my male counterparts. He gave me a funny look. I clarified that I worked really hard in Primary to get there. He said, "Good, I just wanted to make sure."

In (date withheld), I received a text message from another student telling me that she heard that I was going to a board. I called my class advisor to ask about it and he had not heard anything about it. Sure enough, I did not appear on the flight schedule for two weeks. I kept asking my class advisor about it, and he had no idea what was going on and was not helping me get back on the flight schedule. Finally, I got called in to stand before a board that no one had told me about except for the student via text message.

The board was about my height. I'm 5'2" which is just above the Navy's cut-off to be a pilot. My command was trying to physically disqualify me from flying jets in the middle of the syllabus. Fortunately, I was able to persuade them that I was still safe to fly, and I was able to stay.

Meanwhile, the command kept scheduling me with this one instructor who began to give me failing grades. At this point, I knew that the command was trying to get rid of me. It was like that feeling you get when the hairs on the back of your neck stand up because you know something isn't right. I got that feeling.

Several weeks later I discovered this instructor had written a letter to my CO dated just before my board claiming that he did not feel safe flying with me because he felt I was insubordinate in the cockpit and would not be strong enough to pull the ejection seat handle if I needed to. And, in spite of this letter, I was continually scheduled to fly with him only to receive failing grades.

After the holidays, in (date withheld), I went to my class advisor again because I had not been scheduled enough. He told me that I was doing poorly, and that I should not be

surprised because women who are pushed through don't do well — like the first female Tomcat pilot who killed herself behind the boat. I told him this had nothing to do with my being female, and that I earned my spot in jets because I made jet grades in Primary.

Word got around the squadron about what my class advisor had said to me, and I got called into the Operations Officer's office. My Operations Officer asked me if I was accusing the squadron of sexism. "The squadron?" I said. "No."

"Good!" he said "Because there was no sexism in this squadron." He told me that obviously something was wrong with me, so they sent me to the flight surgeon to be psychologically evaluated.

When I reported to the flight surgeon, I told him everything that was going on. He said that there was nothing wrong with me and perhaps I did not fit in and should quit. I told him that I knew that my squadron was trying to me kick me out, but too proud and too stubborn to quit, I was going to try my best to the end.

I was very upset about everything that was going on and attempted to confide in a simulator instructor who had always been kind to me. My kind instructor invited me out to his car in the parking lot of the ground training building saying that he had something to give to me. He handed me a Hebrew-to-English New Testament. He knew that I was Jewish, and I knew what I had just received.

Shocked, I was speechless and thanked him for the gift. I went home and discovered that my Jewish roommate had also received a Bible from the same instructor. My roommate wasn't upset, but I was. Our instructor was in the position to grade us and had put us in an awkward position with a proselytizing tool. I reported it to another instructor in my squadron who told me that I needed thicker skin.

I tried to find another instructor to confide in, so I went on a cross country in the jet with a Marine instructor and told him about the Bible that I had received. He told me that Christians were commanded to spread the gospel. I told him that it was illegal in the military, but I gave up. I was tired of trying to report everything that was happening to me and my command not care.

At this point, I hated my life in the squadron. I was coming home from work and crying every day. I contemplated suicide. I watched my dreams circle the drain. I dreaded going to work, and I was just waiting for them to kick me out.

Eventually, I failed a flight and I was sent to a board where they recommended I be kicked out of the flight program. I tried to explain to the board the sexism and religious discrimination that I encountered in the squadron, but they didn't care.

When I went before my CO in (date withheld), he agreed with my board's findings. When I repeated everything about the sexism and religious discrimination, he told me that I should not tell anyone what happened. He said, "Don't make waves, (name withheld), for your career."

Six weeks later, I found out that I had officially been kicked out of training by the Commodore. According to Naval flight training instructions, I was supposed to have a one-on-one meeting with the Commodore. I never got one, but if I had, I would have told him everything that happened in the squadron. I felt like if he had known everything that happened to me in the squadron, he would have retained me and sent me to another squadron. Instead, my naval career was completely destroyed by a couple of officers in my chain of command who had it out for me from the beginning.

Over the course of thirteen months, I was treated so poorly that I didn't want to get out of bed in the morning. I was almost relieved when they separated me because I knew that at least my horrible treatment would come to an end.

I am a lot happier now. I'm out of the Navy, I got married, and I'm going to graduate school in the fall. I thought that I could try to change the status quo in the Navy alone, but I was wrong. I think that if I had allowed MRFF to get involved, I would still be on active duty and flying jets today.

Thank you so much for all that you do. I hope that people realize that they are not alone and that MRFF can save our careers. I learned the hard way, but I hope that people can see that MRFF is there prevent this from ever happening again.

Very respectfully,

(name and location withheld)



Dear Mr. Weinstein

As you know over the past year I have forwarded you many e-mails regarding the constant bombarding I have received about the harassment we endure during Christian religious observances and holidays. So much so that it disrupts my work and violates my Civil Rights; not to mention it abuses government computer usage as defined in Air Force instructions. There is a huge issue here at the Air Force Personnel Center by leadership distinguishing between religious freedom and religious harassment regarding participation. Just so you know I have an experience level in the military going back to my first memories as a military brat and can distinguish between what is right and wrong – what happens here is wrong!

This past week there was an Easter egg fiasco where everyone was cajoled via e-mail into a long line grabbing plastic eggs from a box that contained prizes. While on the surface this appears fun and unobtrusive. It is not! The leadership in the form of an SES and several GS-15s tolerate and promote forcing religious partying on the work force.

And if you don't participate you are considered an outsider and singled out via backstabbing gossip and punished through your performance appraisal in that you do not receive equitable assessment compared to your more religious colleagues.

Mr. Jim Hale epitomizes this and has harassed several employees including me because we "don't get along" or condones his laissez-faire leadership approach to his lackadaisical situational management style here at the Air Force Personnel Center. In fact he has forced people to go to lunch with him, including me, and attempted to coerce people into adopting his laissez faire management style. In my case he would have me violate the Code of Federal Regulations regarding sound merit principles rather rock the boat.

His approach is categorically the same regarding religious tolerance – get along as institutional behavior and participation is sold out over individual rights. I am certain he

could be relieved of his position for what he has done via the Office of Special Counsel or the Inspector General. Neither he nor anyone that serves in a leadership capacity here has stepped up to rein in the abuse regarding religious observances. The chain of command knows about what takes place and has done zilch! His secretary and a core of his civilians take their cue from him, a core of who believe, and instigate e-mails and observances that the Air Force Personnel center is the seminary of the “civilian” Air Force.

As in a previous letter these civilians are not fruit cakes. They don’t exaggerate or prevaricate but have institutionalized a system to oust those who don’t follow Jim Hale’s or his minions’ lead. This is an extremely serious problem that needs fixing ASAP! My thanks to you, Mr. Weinstein, and the entire MRFF organization.

(name and rank withheld)



Mikey,

I’m an AFA grad who has spent quite a number of years here. The other day, I heard the Dean speak to the faculty and staff on several issues that caught my attention.

The first issue up for discussion was the Gamble study on the religious atmosphere here. I’m not going to go into much detail, since you have already covered the main points. What struck me as odd was that the Dean told everyone that the study used a random sample of cadets and faculty. A random sample? I think not. The cadets and faculty self-selected to provide interviews. Not sure if this was a slip up, but this statement from the Dean was very misleading.

The second issue was with the Dean making a reference to the Honor Code by stating, “Thou shalt not steal” which is taken from the Bible’s Ten Commandments. Are we to trust our leadership with improving the religious atmosphere if they are the ones quoting scripture? She made no attempt to apologize for the remark. I’m not even sure if it registered that she just quoted the Bible during a staff meeting.

The Dean made other references to trusting leadership, but I had already tuned out after these two things. Of course I don't trust USAFA leadership. Of course I'm going to address these with you, since the leadership clearly doesn't get it.

What a shame and a sham. The current administration needs to go.

USAFA grad and current staff member. (name, rank, USAFA Graduating Class year, USAFA Faculty Dept. and Faculty Position Withheld)



To The Military Religious Freedom Foundation:

I am an active duty Judge Advocate in the Air Force. I have been a financial supporter of MRFF since 2007 after I heard Mr. Weinstein speak at an Air Force Judge Advocates' conference at Lackland Air Force Base. Fortunately I have never personally been the subject of religious persecution since I joined the Air Force, however, I was always taught from a young age that religious tolerance is amongst the most important virtues in life. That is why I choose to make a yearly financial contribution to MRFF.

With that in mind I was browsing today at the Andrews Air Force Base Exchange after lunch when I came across the following two books respectively entitled "The Airman's Bible," and "The Soldier's Bible." I do not object to the generic use of "Airman," and "Soldier," as these are terms that could apply to a member of any country's Air Force or Army respectively. What is disturbing about these volumes is that they so prominently feature the Department of the Air Force and Army seals. I find such conspicuous violation of the Joint Ethics Regulations and the Establishment Clause of the US Constitution shocking. It is a big step towards establishing the Holman Christian Standard Bible as the official religious text of the military services of the United States. I find it even more offensive that officials of AAFES have prominently displayed these books on the shelves of the BX of the home of our Commander in Chief. It is appalling that the the symbols of our military services, that represent the millions of lives sacrificed to defend our Constitution and freedoms, are being co-opted in such blatant manner. The work of the MRFF to end this injustice is appreciated.

With My Greatest Respect,

(USAF Judge Advocate's name, rank, USAF position title and USAF unit and USAF military installation withheld)



Dear Mr. Weinstein and MRFF:

During a recent class I monitored at USAFA, a student asked the instructor if he (the instructor) was a USAFA grad, to which the instructor responded, "No, I went to a small, private, Christian college", (emphasis added on the word "Christian", by this USAFA instructor). After the class, the student approached the instructor, asked if he was a "Christian", and entered into a five-minute discussion of the instructor's "Christian" alma mater, "Christian" faith, etc., etc. (So now, for the first time, I have witnessed how all that USAFA-sanctioned "Christian" exceptionalism actually works firsthand.) I and many others here believe this is not only egregious conduct for a USAFA instructor, (and was specifically identified as such during USAFA's "RSVP" [Respecting the Spiritual Values of OTHER People] training I attended in 2005, but which has since been discontinued) but is also a deplorable example of the way in which evangelical USAFA faculty and staff self-identify and reach out to like-minded cadets, creating a seemingly innocuous but significantly damaging atmosphere of preferential treatment for fundamentalist "Christian" faith adherents or worse based upon individually held religious beliefs, or lack thereof. I might add that this particular instructor was hired at USAFA after describing himself as a "Christian" at least 3 times during a 15 minute initial interview. Keep up the fight, Mr. Weinstein and MRFF. We are all depending upon it.

USAFA Faculty Member's name, rank, USAFA Faculty Dept., Title and Position Withheld



Mr. Weinstein and MRFF,



My wife, our baby daughter and I need the help of you and the Military Religious Freedom Foundation badly! As an enlisted member of the United States Air Force Academy, you always feel as if you are under someone's radar. Since being stationed at USAFA I have learned about the force structure we are expected to follow, the volunteer duties that you are told to go to and how they are committed to excellence for our USAFA cadets. I worked diligently to earn my status as a good USAF airman and prove my worth both inside and outside our work area. My first supervisor was constantly talking about going to church, inviting us to pray with them and always offering to give rides to HER fundamentalist Christian church. This supervisor was disliked by many because of her lack of professionalism and failure to handle most duties assigned to her. Many chose to ignore her just to avoid uncomfortable talks about Jesus and religion. Since she was my official USAF supervisor, everytime there was a conflict between me and someone else, (normally because I would ask for proof when they would comment on things or say things were being done wrong) I would end up hearing about how I needed to go to church because it would really help. I was also told that if I ever married, I would need to remember about faith because it's what keeps a family together.

Of course, I was immediately briefed on using the chaplain services to help handle stress, both at home and at work. The few chaplains I have encountered were normally upbeat but openly admitting being depressed and feeling like they couldn't do their job properly. I made a choice to stop seeing the chaplains once I felt they could not meet my needs and seemed far too busy with planning the many, many large social Christian-based functions that the base commander/USAFA Superintendent organized.

I was brought up as a Protestant but not a diehard church attendee who spends all his free time helping the church. I learned this was a fatal mistake in my USAFA career. I began volunteering through multiple programs to ensure my performance ratings would be high but also to ensure I was giving back to my community. They announced that younger airman would be put in for awards all year long, provided we stayed out of trouble and represented the USAFA properly. I failed to earn Amn of the Qtr, Amn Year, earning my volunteer service medals and earning SrA BTZ when I was put up for them. When I asked

why a specific airman had won, when I had literally three times the volunteer hours and workplace decorations for my duties, I was told it was because he volunteered at Church (the “right kind of church”) and they favor church-based volunteering more than anything else because faith is extremely important in the military. I later won Amn of the Year and top (AFSC withheld) for our group at a different time. I had begun questioning my leadership’s intentions and qualities when I suddenly began receiving LOR/LOC’s from my chain of command. There were people who had DUIs and multiple DUI’s that were being swept under the rug but I was receiving counseling for every little thing they could think of. The stress, anger and depression began setting in for me when I realized I was not going to be able to survive here at USAFA unless I started acting like they wanted; ie. being “the right kind of Christian”. I began talking about attending a church, off-base, and learned a few passes from the bible that I would use when they questioned my faith and if I was truly seeking help. Throughout this time I worked with a handful of USAFA cadets who admitted they simply tried their best to ignore religion and constant religious proselytizing at the Academy, despite their personal beliefs, because they did not want any trouble and did not want to be scrutinized over their choices. My hopes sank even deeper.

Despite my career being threatened, I managed to find the love of my life. I married my wife and instantly had come under fire from my chain of command. I was told I was supposed to get permission before marrying anyone. My wife met my chain of command and never told anyone she was brought up as a dedicated Southern Baptist. She had spent her time in advanced classes for school to become a leader of her faith but chose to pursue being a house wife and raising a family. There is no doubt my wife knows more about the bible and every other religion than most chaplains or other religious members. Within a few weeks she had become disgusted with my boss’s treatment of us and the USAFA religious programs “study groups” that were populated with close minded, fundamentalist Christian believers that would rather verbally degrade you than have an honest debate about religious point of views. My wife felt so unsafe about the treatment of our family that she spent most of her time at home, avoiding anyone on the base. Worse off, she spent the majority of her pregnancy away from me because she felt unsafe dealing

with anyone on base anymore. The stress continued to build. We began to fight more often and were both miserable. I tried my best to keep my work drama at work, but it poured into my home life and tainted everything that I cared about. I felt I could not lead a good role in my work, that I failed at every task assigned to me and now, my own family values seemed to be falling apart.

My wife became pregnant, which was a miracle and unexpected. Once my bosses found out that she had moved away to get medical care from her local doctors back home, they began telling me that I had made a bad choice by creating a child with my wife since I was not thinking about what the Air Force needed. I mentioned I had adopted a fake, "pretend" religion (fundamentalist Christianity) to help take pressure off my family and even went online and became an ordained minister, despite its weak credits, to try and make the pain of religious hatred stop. I barely slept, had medical problems hampering my every move and always I had people telling me that I had to pray more, attend a different, more fundamentalist Christian church and focus on finding my balance and support.

I finally received a new boss, after a long battle of write-ups and being reprimanded. He promised to be different and help everyone succeed. He said family was the most important thing and that he "prayed for every person in our unit". That statement was the first sign of the terrible problems to come. He explained he was a strong "faith based preacher's son" and he prayed for everyone no matter what. He pulled us all into a meeting and spoke for over 2 hours about religion, praying for support, attending services and his devotion. He, of course, always tried to say he was not pushing religion on anyone. Within 3 days, ALL of the females in the clinic felt uncomfortable around him. At one point, one of the new troops started crying because she felt he was pushing his fundamentalist Christian faith on her and made her feel uncomfortable.

I met with him and bluntly told him the problems and how it caused the staff to act. He was shocked and said he would work on it. He spends less time in big meetings but now does more one on one meetings and always mentions praying and the Lord Jesus Christ. He told me he would protect me, my family and help remove the LOC/LOR in my files that he felt were improper to help regain some of the credit I was due. I thanked him

and left before getting into another talk about his fundamentalist Christian religion. Later, I did ask him, if it was proper for a phone call to end with a military member saying "Have a blessed day". I have heard this pop up over the base and I was told, "It is their religious right to be able to say it. If it offends you then please forward this up your chain of command for evaluation but in the past it has not caused problems". Given that answer, I gave up trying to address any of these items. Why? Because, trying to use the "chain of command", the IG or the MEO at USAFA only targets you for more abuse. It is as useful a shooting yourself in the head when it comes to complaints about terrible and intolerable religious pressure and proselytizing from your USAF supervisors. Everyone who is religiously oppressed here at USAFA, and there are MANY OF US, knows that and that is why there are never any complaints "officially" filed here at USAFA when it comes to religious disrespect and intolerance by anyone. That is why noone would go talk with the retired General (Gamble) or his group of "religious climate assessors". That is why we all turn to you, Mr. Weinstein, and the Military Religious Freedom Foundation. There is no place else to go.

Shortly thereafter, I had a serious medical injury and was bedridden awaiting surgery. My wife became upset that my boss was not taking the time to come to our home as promised for the "proper documents" to be filled out. He finally arrived after my wife began yelling at him and while they talked in a separate room. He asked about my past and my wife told him very little since she does not trust him. Then it happened. He told me wife that "His (meaning "mine") injuries and medical problems seem to have no end. It's sad but it seems like the Lord is punishing him (me) for leading a bad life of some sort". My wife was absolutely SHOCKED!. She was speechless and appalled but kept her calm and listened to him talk about proper prayer and faith for over an hour. As always, he told my wife he was praying for her, my daughter and me. My wife decided she had listened to enough and asked him to leave our home.

Another staff member has been working here for over 12 years and said EVERY religious right she has ever had, has been denied or abused. She had originally been like me and tried to fight the system but ended up being demoted and denied jobs because

the very people she fought over unwanted fundamentalist Christian religious issues called potential employers and told them “they had problems with her”. She now gets paid less than some summer new hire students, and she has been here over 12 years. She makes it clear that it all started when she wanted her USAFA bosses to respect her personal religious beliefs and fought the management when they would not stop the endless hurtful proselytizing.

I have been at the Academy for long enough to watch scores of people come and go. Despite the new blood, new ideas and promises made; the USAF Academy has proven that there is indeed terrible intolerance for any other religion except the “approved USAFA religion” of fundamentalist Christianity. Whether they understand the implications or the true lasting effects, it has become a staple here at USAFA to hear the upper chain of command say “it’s always been done this way”. My family life has suffered to the point I almost lost my wife permanently since she could not cope with the stress. My career has been destroyed from multiple issues I could not fight and it never seems to gain any recourse. Every friend that is stationed at another installation has never had these same types of problems and the few that moved to other bases even said they have no problems now. Some of them were even considered bad airman while here and now, are earning awards and accommodations everyday at their new base. MRFF has made a difference at these other bases I’m sure.

I am terrified for our new airman, the families stationed here and how many lives have been damaged or ruined from this structure and environment of poisonous religious intolerance and abuse towards anyone who is not a fundamentalist Christian. I wanted my daughter to go to the USAF Academy when she gets older but have been sadly reluctant to push this issue since I don’t want her to endure this personal nightmare of prejudice and bigotry for not being of the “right USAFA religion”. I don’t see how anyone with any other faith could survive at USAFA. Mr. Weinstein, please help us. We don’t know what to do to fight this anymore.

V/R

(USAF Academy Enlisted Member's name, rank, AFSC and USAF Academy assigned unit withheld)



Mr. Weinstein and MRFF,

I am a Catholic soldier in the U.S. Army. Throughout my career in the army, I have come up against difficulties when trying to practice my Catholic faith. On almost every occasion in which I have made a request for religious accommodation my request was ignored and, many times, treated disrespectfully by a corrupt and uninformed chain of command. Moreover, the general mentality and approach taken by leadership in dealing with religion and requests for accommodation has ALWAYS been that "one size fits all". Unfortunately that "one size" has been a form of 'fundamentalist', Protestant Christianity that shows disdain for any need to go somewhere to pray, to 'attend' a Mass, or to 'see' a priest, or to respect these events and encounters as 'obligations'. A perfect example of this is one of my platoon sergeants on active duty who responded to my request to attend Mass with "What?! I just pray my bible...why do you need to go anywhere?" Suffice it to say, he sat on my request, never bringing it up the chain, because 'he' viewed my desire to meet an obligation as wholly insignificant. Moreover, leaders, like this platoon sergeant, believe their thinking is perfectly in line with proper command policy, or that there is no violation of any regulation. They believe they are completely in the right when issuing out this sort of all-encompassing judgment regarding the nature and extent of religious practice. Their version trumps all others...they even trump the U.S. Constitution...and unfortunately, their false wisdom seems to permeate the army. Mr. Weinstein, I have nowhere else to turn except to you and the Military Religious Freedom Foundation.

Please let me elaborate some more. While in Basic I was being made to do pushups for no reason on a Sunday morning almost missing the Sunday worship formation. After the push-ups, I grabbed my battle buddy, who was Catholic and had previously agreed to attend Mass with me after chow, and asked him if he would run with me to catch up to the formation that had already departed from the barracks area. My battle buddy replied that it was too late. He decided not to go with me. I was incensed at this injustice. I was a 30

year old man at the time with an education and experience, thinking that it would be all too easy to 'brain-wash' young 18 year old recruits into giving up on their religion. So, without my battle buddy (this was a breaking of the rules), I ran after the worship formation. No one noticed. I am a firm believer in the warrior ethos that one should 'never leave a fallen comrade,' but in this case, I felt that the army had left a fallen comrade (my battle buddy) by not restraining a drill sergeant who was hampering the freedom of a soldier to attend worship. By allowing such a thing to occur I felt that our training was setting up a specious set of priorities, with religion or 'freedom of religion' and the U.S. Constitution at the bottom. And, in particular, if a soldier was unwilling to accept what seemed to me the indifferent attitude of the prevailing fundamentalist version of Christianity that disdained the need for a Catholic to 'go' somewhere for worship, that soldier would get left behind and unjustly victimized by the establishment. It seemed that the brain-washing had begun. This was my first experience with the sort of conflict I would endure while a U.S. army Soldier, even while on active duty and in the National Guard. Also in Basic, I made a request to attend Mass on a Holy day. An assistant drill sergeant told me that we would not be doing anything during the times I requested and, believe it or not, asked me to circulate a petition throughout the company, and then present my request to the head drill sergeant. I circulated the petition and obtained a list of approximately 15 names. I presented the petition to the head drill sergeant. The head drill sergeant took the list and told me to wait for his decision on the Holy day in question. I waited. When the day arrived and the company had been dismissed for the day, prior to the Mass time that was to occur at the nearby post Chapel, I approached the head drill sergeant and repeated my request. The head drill sergeant angrily looked at me, as I stood there at attention. And with one finger, in extreme disapproval, with what seemed like disgust or even hatred, pointed to the stairs leading up to our Platoon's barracks room. He never said a word. I stood there dumbfounded. I felt helpless and incapable of doing anything in the face of 'the advantage of the stronger'. I remember looking at the E6 rank on his collar, at his drill sergeant hat, the hateful look on his face, his rude, careless, and disrespectful body language (all of which appeared different and 'truly' threatening and hateful in relation to this issue of religion), and feeling intimidated and shaken to the depths of my soul. I felt I had no other choice

but to give up. I said 'hooah' with the little emotional strength and courage I had left to muster, did an about-face, and ran up the stairs into the barracks. Our platoon did ABSOLUTELY NOTHING for the next five hours. This latter incident reveals the fact that in the army, in my experience, 'one size fits all' when it comes to granting religious freedoms. If one falls outside of the correct size—a narrow, sterilized and iconoclastic form of Protestant fundamentalism that shows disdain for Catholics, Catholics who may have additional needs outside the usual Sunday worship requirement, it becomes all but impossible to get a fair hearing from leaders. And even when seeking the help of the chaplaincy, as a Catholic, I have always been confronted with head chaplains who espoused the Protestant fundamentalist, anti-Catholic, position; and who prevented me from practicing my Catholic faith because they prevented Catholic chaplains from performing their Catholic ministry. I know very well active duty military Catholic chaplains who feel terribly abused by this same prejudice themselves and are helpless to confront it. Needing to 'attend' a Mass on Sunday, much less a Mass on any other day than Sunday, was viewed as simply unimportant or even stupid. While I was not taken seriously, these leaders and chaplains believed that I could not and should not be taken seriously. The two Basic training experiences described above were proto-typical of my later life on active duty and in the guard, where terribly painful and degrading, fundamentalist Protestant ignorance, hostility and discrimination all bared their ugly heads, and continue to do so. It's everywhere. Noone stands up to it for fear of being horribly victimized in retaliation as only the military can do. Please, Mr. Weinstein and MRFF, help me and help all the other Catholics who are facing this blatant prejudice and degradation.

(U.S. Army Soldier's name, rank, MOS, military installation and location withheld)



Mikey,

I have been looking forward to my 35th Class Reunion at the Air Force Academy and the chance to catch up with my old squadron mates and regale in the "Spirit of '76!"



Graduating from the Air Force Academy in the year of our nation's bicentennial celebration, gave me a laser-like focus on the importance and brilliance of our American freedoms. I don't have to tell you that chief among those, and listed first in the Constitution, is the insurance that Congress will make no law respecting the establishment of religion. In the 35 years since I graduated from USAFA I have watched in silent terror as the evangelical dominionist Christians have infiltrated the highest positions of leadership in our Nation's military. What seemed at first like a harmless faction, has at long last blanketed Air Force leadership. My classmates Jack Catton and Mike Gould are prime examples. Please pardon the cliché, but I have long maintained that allowing Mike Gould to be the Superintendent of the Air Force Academy was like asking the fox to guard the henhouse.

Having said that, I am sorry to say I was not surprised yet I was severely disappointed when I read the following email reminding my class of the approaching reunion. Perhaps you can imagine the feelings of disenfranchisement as I read the following reminder about our upcoming reunion festivities in Colorado Springs. Everything was fine until I reached the final bullet about the cadet-ministries get-together. It is wrong on so many levels. It suggests that my entire class endorses these decidedly evangelical dominionist Christian ministries, and it jams their brand of religion down every other 76er's throat, whether they like it or not. Our Class of '76 Academy reunion has been hijacked! Our Air Force has been hijacked!

To add insult to injury, over the last year Class of 1976 Academy Association of Graduates correspondence has replaced our class motto "Spirit of '76!" with "The Spirit Lives!" Instead of celebrating the founding of our country and our association with it's bicentennial, we have insidiously changed our class motto and ethos to one of praising the "Spirit." While I have deeply held religious convictions of my own, being a part of the Class of 1976, was by design not affiliated with an indorsed religion. The cavalier cadet-Christian-ministries announcement at the end of this email is so brazen that it makes me literally sick to my stomach with grief. I speak for others that don't dare speak because they depend on making a living in a defense-industrial complex that is swimming with evangelical dominionist senior leaders, in and out of uniform. I can't think of anything less

American or antithetical to what it meant to be a member of the Class of 1976, than living under the tyranny of a government endorsed religion. This was never supposed to happen in this country. So on behalf of classmates that have shared the same feelings I have expressed in this email I am turning to you Mikey and the MRFF to fight the fight we are unable to fight.

Spirit of '76!

(USAF Academy Class of 1976 Graduate's name and location withheld)

Class of 1976

35th Reunion Update

Fellow 76er's,

We are just a few weeks away from our 35th Reunion. A few items for your information:

Register for Events: If you plan to attend any of the events during our reunion, and have not yet registered, please go to the AOG website and register. We need to have an accurate head counts for the events. Click on the Class Reunions to the right of the page and go to the link for the Class of 1976. After August 22 there will be a late registration fee.

Hotel Registration: There are still rooms available at the Marriott if you have not already booked yours.

Dress code for events: Most of our reunion events are very casual but a few require a bit more. Thursday evening Ice Breaker at the Carlton House – open collar with jacket (sport coat). Friday evening dinner at the Marriott – open collar with jacket (sport coat) OR your registration football jersey

Saturday morning tailgate: The tailgate will start at 1130 (2 hours prior to kickoff). Strongly suggest you plan to arrive close to tailgate start time in order to be able to park

close to the tailgate area. PLEASE NOTE: This is not the AOG tailgate, which is open to all. Check your reunion registration packet for specific location.

Cadet Ministries Get-together: A cadet ministries (BSU, Campus Crusade, Bauman's Study, OCF, Navigators, etc.) get-together is being planned for Saturday morning before the class tailgate party. If you are interested, e-mail Stan Rader for information and to RSVP.

See you in a few weeks!

THE SPIRIT LIVES!



Dear Mikey,

I enjoyed reading MRFF's recent headliner in the Huffington Post "A Spiritually Transformed Military with Ambassadors for Christ in Uniform."

You may recall that I wrote you last year about my experience with the National Guard Bureau Inspector General's where a cabal of anti-Semitic, evangelical officers (mostly IG branch chiefs) accused me of (accusation withheld). I beat their attack and subsequent investigation and am currently pursuing legal action again two of them pending documents I requested under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

I thought I'd share with you what happened to my wife, (spouse's name withheld), and me recently while attending an Army National Guard sponsored, "Strong Bonds" marriage seminar. The National Guard holds these seminars a few times a year for married service personnel where they take place on weekends, usually at a posh (4-star or above) hotel in (location withheld) all at tax payer expense. The National Guard Chaplain's Office leads the seminar.

(spouse's name withheld) and I participated in one of these seminars about 3 years ago. Although the chaplain who led it was a christian, he used non-religious training aids and kept religious references out of his discussions. (spouse's name withheld) and I enjoyed the weekend and were impressed with the seminar.

As we had such a good time at our first Strong Bonds seminar, we decided to attend another one last weekend, again in (location withheld). This time it was led by two evangelical christian chaplains who did not participate in the seminar (spouse's name withheld) and I attended 3 years earlier. The seminar was much different this time. Saturday, they spent a lot of time using materials with a religious bent to them. Specifically, they showed a DVD of a "motivational speaker" who also happened to be an evangelical christian pastor. I don't recall the guy's name, but he laced his presentation with biblical verses, and was filmed at what appeared to be a large mega-church. The Saturday piece was borderline with us (spouse's name withheld is a very liberal catholic and I'm an agnostic jew), but we felt that no lines were crossed. However, the presentation the following day left us speechless! (spouse's name withheld) was so upset that she stormed out of the room (she didn't make a scene). I remained to see how far the presentation would go.

Sunday's seminar started out with a presentation about how masturbation is a lead destroyer of marriages. This discussion lasted about 45 minutes. The "evils of masturbation" segment was followed by the evils of pornography! My wife immediately left in disgust! I stayed and listened to about an hour of evangelical arguments about why these two "evils" must be avoided. He then went around the room asking the class (socratically) why porno was "bad." he randomly call on about 5 people and they all had reasons that confirmed why porno was bad. I regret not raising my hand to challenge him, but the Chief of Staff, a 1-star, and his wife were sitting near me and I didn't want to be labeled a trouble maker. As difficult as it was to listen to this BS, I wanted to see how far these chaplains would cross this line. After the second break, my head was hurting from hearing all this nonsense and bible thumping that I left!

The senior chaplain was an Air National Guard Lt.Col. who told the class that he was an Air Force Academy grad and a proud christian. During one of the Saturday breaks, before he let loose on the evils of masturbation and porno, I asked him if he knew you. His friendly demur and outgoing personality INSTANTLY changed to that of a dark and angry man! He looked at me as if I was the devil himself for simply asking the question! He abruptly ended our conversation and walked away. Very rude guy.

Despite all of the good work you and other similar organizations are doing, the evangelical christian cancer has made many gains in my organization. It appears that the USAFA religious mafia has infiltrated the Army National Guard. From my vantage point, I have seen the decline begin with officers inserting biblical passages into their email signature blocks, religious bigots attacking me in the IG office, and evangelical chaplains TAKING OVER the Guard's chaplain office.

I don't have a solution, but I thought you'd like to know that the religious evangelicals, spawned at USAFA have extended their tentacles to the National Guard Bureau.

Thank you for all that you and the MRFF do for service personnel!

Be well,

(U.S. Army National Guard Officer's name, rank, MOS and military installation withheld)



Mikey,

Check out the tagline to the below signature block. This went out yesterday, Aug. 25, '11 at 14:09 pm CDT. Can't get away from it! And, an email just went out last week base-wide telling everyone to clean up their signature blocks in preparation for our September UCI (Unit Compliance Inspection) here at Maxwell AFB, Alabama. Seriously, if USAF leaders can't enforce sanctions against unconstitutional Christian proselytizing at this level, well, you know, they won't at any level because they just don't want to.

(USAF MEMBER'S NAME, RANK, UNIT WITHHELD)

—Original Message—

From: Speer, Janet B Civ USAF AETC 42 LRS/LGRT

Good afternoon,

The request to charge travel to CBA is fine. There is a situation, on Orders #16CI2J-Escalante and #16CQTB-McKenzie a clarification on the TO line is needed.

Serving in His Midst! (enlarging and red highlight added)

jbs

Janet B. Speer

Logistic Readiness Squadron

Supervisor, Passenger Travel

Maxwell AFB, AL 36112

334-953-5469/DSN: 493

Fax:334-953-6353/DSN 493



Hello,

I'm currently deployed and proud to serve my country as a US Muslim Soldier. Sadly I'm facing a persistent harassment due my Muslim faith. Things are getting worse when Ramadan started. I do fast during the mission and I feel soldiers around me started to give me more tasks and been singled and labeled as a " MUZIE " I did follow the chain of command and verbally complaint but when yesterday one of the soldier assaulted me I no longer feel comfortable being around the team as I feel scared of my life.

I'm a translator and none of the team does speak a foreign language except a local contractor and myself.

Any reply will be highly appreciated.

Thank you, (U.S. Muslim American Soldier's name, rank, MOS, combat military unit and combat base withheld)



Mikey,

I would like to personally thank each of you for your support, which is vital to me as a soldier fighting the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) on the ground in Iraq. Your support during this deployment is sincerely appreciated and is critical as we continue to fight the war and transform our current force into a better one. During that incident last month I felt lost and hopeless. Thank you Mikey for your prompt reply . As you know most of soldiers like us first generation do not have any support back in the state. I personally don't have any family member within the rank as the others. When that problem happened to me and filed a complain it did not solve the issue. I had to educate myself and I found your association. Your emails did give some straight and it did made me feel that I have a family member watching and supporting me. THANK YOU MIKEY.

DR provided me a good piece of advice which is nutrition. Thank you DR.

Due to my slow connection I could not connect to your site and make a donation to support your hard work. As soon as I return back to the state I will. Your help was very appreciated and I'm sure your job has along way to be done. Many soldiers with different faith and sex orientation face worse situation than I faced. I truly appreciate your hard work.

(name withheld)



SUBJECT: USAF CHIEF OF STAFF GENERAL NORTON SCHWARTZ'S MEMO ON RELIGIOUS NEUTRALITY

TO: THE MILITARY RELIGIOUS FREEDOM FOUNDATION ("MRFF") AND MR. MIKEY WEINSTEIN

Mr. Weinstein and the MRFF, my name is (USAF Academy cadets's name, cadet rank and title withheld). I became an official client of MRFF just a day ago after personally witnessing the appalling reaction of my USAFA Cadet chain of command and USAFA Officer chain of command to Gen. Schwartz's awesome memo dated 1 Sept. 11 on "Religious Neutrality". I called Mr. Weinstein to verify the truth and existence of Gen. Schwartz's memo and we spoke for a few minutes. I couldn't believe it was actually him himself when he answered my call. I told this to other cadets and they called him too. He answered the phone call each time himself. He told us that the memo from Gen. Schwartz was very real and did exist.

For the record, I am a Christian (Protestant/Baptist) and occasionally attend worship services here at the Air Force Academy or elsewhere downtown. I only found out about Gen Schwartz's memo because I saw and heard an officer and 3 other cadets saying some very bad things about you and General Schwartz's memo, Mr. Weinstein, in the Fairchild Hall academic building at the end of last week. I was really shocked by the messed up things they said about you and the MRFF in particular, very personal and hateful. I googled as Mr. Weinstein suggested and had no problem finding out about Gen. Schwartz's memo from some websites. Including primarily of course MRFF's, but others like Air Force Times and the C. Springs Independent and the story by Chris Rodda on Alternet. The "cow milking" thing was pretty unbelievable to me and many of my classmates as all of this sad situation is here. No one would believe it. But we do now.

This weekend I "informally asked" so as not to arouse suspicion, my cadet chain of command if I could verbally brief my (USAF Academy cadet's Wing/Group/Squadron designation withheld) about the Chief of Staff's memo. I also asked, in lieu of briefing my (USAF Academy cadet's Wing/Group/Squadron designation withheld), if I could post General Schwartz's memo on the bulletin and message boards etc. located in my (USAF Academy cadet's Wing/Group/Squadron designation withheld). I was told the following words exactly; "Don't go there. Who's side are you on"? Not knowing how to respond, and being shocked, I just said nothing. But the damage has been done and my eyes are now open to the religious bigotry of Christian bullies here at the Air Force Academy. I did



not fully see it before. But I definitely do now. So do many of us. I discussed becoming a MRFF client with my mom and dad and another good friend who graduated from the Academy a few years ago. My friend (USAF Academy grad and Officer's name and rank withheld) said that his/her Wing Commander at (USAF military installation's name and location withheld) sent out General Schwartz's religious neutrality memo to all USAF personnel in his/her Wing right after receiving it. Anyways, my friend and parents all encouraged me to do become a MRFF client and I'm encouraging others to do it too. Thank you Mr Weinstein and the MRFF for giving us a place to go for help. It's clear that if you even ask for help here you are taking a bad risk.

Mr. Weinstein and the MRFF, what about an idea I have? If you wrote a letter to USAF Academy Superintendent General Gould and asked him to please send out the USAF Chief of Staff's memo on religious neutrality to USAFA cadets and staff, do you think he would agree to it? If you can do this, please tell Gen. Gould that you have heard from many cadets in the Cadet Wing who want to see the Chief of Staff's important memo being sent out by him, Gen. Gould. That way we would all know that our Academy and Cadet chains of command also see the Chief of Staff's memo as equally important. If he doesn't do it, we will all know just the opposite.

V/R

(USAF Academy cadet's name, cadet rank and title and Wing/Group/Squadron designation all withheld)



Mikey.. as unbelievable as all this is.. I do believe it and get it. You know where I'm coming from. 40 years of my life were dedicated, full time and all out, to attempting political change in this country utilizing the political construct of the USA as we know it. There were some opportunities on the earlier end of my involvement but they have long since faded away. I can't justify using my remaining time, energy and resources working a system that isn't working anymore. I'm not giving up on trying to make this a better world,

simply finding a potentially more effective way to do it. It's not about facts, it's about belief systems. Read enough books now to know that. By exposing the wrongful beliefs that motivate so many you are making the right kind of contribution to make this a better world and to give our species a chance to make it. I'm trying to support a shift that is going on from an era of "faith" to an era of knowledge. Quantum science is pulling the curtain back on what constitutes our "reality". When you start to learn about phenomena such as "entanglement" and "non-locality" you start to see everything about life differently. We are coming to know that we are in fact all connected. It's really stunning but more and more demonstrable. Hang in there my friend. What you are doing is hard, painful and an overwhelming challenge. You stand on the shoulder of many who have come before you and will carry on after you. Hey, if it was easy, everyone would do it. ONWARD!



Mikey, my name is (USAF Academy cadet's name and cadet rank withheld). We have met but you probably would not know that. I am one of the cadets here at the Air Force Academy who has been a MRFF client for (number of years and months withheld), I am also one of the many MRFF cadet clients here who appear to be a "super-stoked Christian" to avoid the direct and indirect shitstorm you get for not being one here. alot of us do this and most are clients of the MRFF. Just wanted to let you know how "special" you are Mikey. At our weekly bible study the other night held in (bible study's USAF Academy location withheld) our group's leader spent an amazing half an hour on you and the "obsessed Christian-hating legacy" which you and your Weinstein family and the MRFF have cursed the Academy with. They showed pictures of you and your wife and kids. From the internet I think. Our bible study group leader said that you Mikey were the most dangerous threat to the Word of Jesus Christ in America today. Everone just nodded approval. I wanted to ask why but didn't. Another cadet in our bible study did though. Our leader mentioned as "evidence" the billboard you had just put up in C. Springs. What? Then even I could not resist asking naive why that was considered "evidence" of how dangerous to Jesus you were. Another cadet said to me (with the leader's and everyone else's approval) "well, did you actually read what the billboard says"? I told them that the

newspapers reported that it only said what the Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Schwartz said about making sure there is no religious favoritism in the USAF. No shit Mikey you could have heard a pin drop. Then our study leader said “exactly, now do you see why Weinstein is so dangerous?” Seriously? Trying not to have my head explode I just slowly said yes like I had just had this total revelation or something. I’d laugh but it’s not even funny. I live in an alternate universe here, Mikey. So do all the others who fake being a part of it to avoid the religion insanity here which is considered as sanity. Thank you and the MRFF for fighting it for us. (P.S. and say hi to your bodyguard for us all. We saw you guys at the TCU game a month ago. Do you recall your “surprise escort”? Thanks for coming up so we could talk and see you.)

V/R

(USAF Academy cadet’s name, cadet rank, cadet position title and cadet squadron withheld)



Mikey, I am an upperclass cadet at the USAF Academy. And yes I am a Christian but not an “Air Force Academy approved” one. Late yesterday, the Academy’s head chaplain, a full colonel, sent out an e-mail advertising a clearly evangelical Christian family/marriage seminar to ALL personnel at the Academy. In it, the most senior ranking Academy chaplain tells us all that his e-mail complies with General Schwartz’s 1 Sept. 2011 memo on the importance of religious neutrality. How nice of him to do that. Except, given that, except for us cadets (thanks to MRFF putting up that billboard of the Chief of Staff’s directive in Col. Springs) , noone else in either the Academy faculty, the 10th Air base Wing and other Academy orgs. has even seen General Schwartz’s memo. It is just totally hypocritical bullshit that the CHRISTIAN family/marriage event gets OFFICIALLY sent to EVERYBODY when the Chief of Staff’s memo has obviously been kept under wraps by Lt. General Gould and his staff. Why? What is the message here? Simple. Lt. Gen. Gould and his Academy want you to be a zealous Christian in the USAF more than it wants you to know

about the Chief of Staff's memo on the limits and perils of being a zealous Christian in the USAF. Again, bullshit. Thank you and MRFF for being the only place we can go to protest. If we could "Occupy Lt. Gen. Gould's office" a la Wall Street we would. But we can't. Therefore, we come to you.

(name and e mail address withheld)



Dear Mikey,

I saw the recent MRFF release about the USAF Academy (USAFA) Chaplain's office publicizing books for evangelical Christian authors and, frankly, I'm not surprised. After all, what can you expect from an organization headed by a callous, unprofessional and uneducated individual who doesn't even understand the Constitution his organization defends? During new faculty orientation this summer, this same Chaplain (USAF Academy Head Chaplain, Col. Robert Bruno) stood up in front of over a hundred new USAFA faculty and told them that "there is no wall" between church and state! Maybe for him there isn't, but for the rest of us, it's a pretty clear concept. He then railed against the "increased secularization" that has eroded morality in our society and proceeded to deliver a 15-minute "homily" on why USAFA has only the "perception" of religious intolerance, despite documented instances of proselytization and even "HR decisions influenced by faith affiliation!" Seriously! If this is the individual that the leadership is relying on for counseling in religious toleration matters, no wonder the institution has completely lost the bubble!

But the worst part was the characterization of you and the MRFF (you weren't mentioned by name, but it was obvious who he was talking about) as maintaining a "constant drumbeat" with an "alleged narrative of proselytization" that is "actually an attack on religion!" I can't believe this guy collects a DoD paycheck, much less on for an O-6 Full Colonel!

Thank you and MRFF for standing up to the religious zealots that, in your absence, would have long-ago turned USAFA into a theological seminary. They just don't get it, and

I can't understand why our leadership (at all levels) doesn't either. No wonder we keep having to have "religious toleration" training. (In addition to half a day during orientation, we recently completed another half a day within our academic departments) Maybe instead of just writing some meaningless and ineffective training, the Air Force should take some REAL action to correct all the instances of religious intolerance at USAFA. If they can't, then they should just shut this place down.

(USAF Academy Professor and Active Duty Officer's name, rank, USAF Academy Faculty position, title and Faculty Dept. withheld)



Mikey,

Having known you for many years and closely followed and supported the Military Religious Freedom Foundation (MRFF), I am keenly aware of the battle you are fighting with respect to religious intolerance and command abuse in the military. With equal interest and support, I have followed the latest fight centered on the USAF Chief of Staff's memorandum regarding religious neutrality in the military. At the release of the memo and the ensuing weeks involving the posting of the memo on a Colorado Springs billboard, I was TDY (temporarily assigned) to (military installation withheld) AFB for training. In mid October, 2011, I returned to my home unit at (military installation withheld) and was eager to read my numerous emails and find the disseminated copy of the memo. Though I had already read the entirety of the memo through internet postings, I wanted to see what my USAF chain of command had added to the official release of the USAF Chief of Staff's message – whether positive or negative. However, I found neither; the memo was not distributed to my squadron. Having asked around the squadron, nobody seemed to know what I was talking about. While uncertain which echelon of my chain had neglected to pass the message to their subordinates, I did not want to confront commanders directly. After a few days of asking around the squadron, I asked the Group Commander's Executive Officer, another (USAF officer's rank withheld) who I deal with regularly. I figured

if the memo had made it to the Group level, then surely he would know about it. Again, I got the same response – he didn't know what I was talking about or that it existed at all. My Wing leadership is geographically separated at (military installation withheld), but I happened to have a trusted friend at the Wing Staff as well. I received the same response from him, he's never seen or heard of such a memo from the CSAF.

Though I thought my squadron commander or the group commander may have had their disagreements with the memo and chosen not to pass the message along, I was quite surprised that the memo had not even travelled to the Wing Staff level. Of course it maybe have gone that far but stopped and gone no further. Regardless, thousands of airmen in my Wing have never seen or even realize the existence of such a message from the highest echelon of the USAF. I distinctly remember receiving messages throughout my USAF career from the highest levels about all sorts of changes to AF policy, mission statements, and culture. The USAF Chief of Staff's recent memo about religious neutrality is clearly addressed to all airmen at all levels and must be understood as part of the intended culture of the AF. I am equally angry and disheartened to know that because certain members of my leadership do not agree with this message, they have chosen to take it upon themselves to block a directive from the USAF Chief of Staff.

I know that this is just another page in the volumes of complaints that you at MRFF receive on a regular basis. Hopefully this letter can help to further your efforts in fighting the suffocating and oppressive members of our military's leadership that continue to disregard the simple fact that serving in the military is a secular act. I was so very happy to see the USAF Chief of Staff make a definitive and official statement on the subject of religious neutrality, but the message just isn't getting out! I am out of personal contacts at higher levels of my chain of command. Please help me to find where the train came off the tracks so the memo can be distributed properly. I am at your service if there's anything else I can do. Thanks as always!

Keep Fighting!

(USAF Fighter Pilot's name, rank, military unit and military installation withheld)



Dear Mikey Weinstein

I just read the article in the Gazette about Operation Christmas Child. A few years ago, when I first heard of this organization, I wanted to help. I was a single mother of a young child and I didn't have much, but I wanted to help--this shoe box was going to children who had nothing.

But after I contacted the local origination and received all the information, I backed out. I couldn't afford to pay a fee to have the box delivered and also pay for everything that I put into the box. Then I found out that along with the box I was going to send, the organization was going to open my box and include a religious message. I have a problem with giving a religious message in order for the kids to receive the shoe box of toys. How do we know what religion and beliefs their families have?

I also wonder why this organization requires a \$7 per box "donation". It seems like a lot of money to ship a shoe box, especially when they are shipping hundreds to the same area.

I question the salary of \$473,440 (in 2009) of W. Franklin Graham III (oldest son of Billy Graham) according to the Charity Navigator

According to their website "Vulnerable children are rescued, educated, fed, clothed, and sheltered, letting them know that God loves them, Jesus died and rose again for them, and they are not forgotten."

Thank you for bringing up this matter. I understand your objection to who is promoting this at the AFA and how it is being done.

(name withheld)



Mikey,

I am a proud United States Army Infantry Officer just back in the States (Fort XXXX, state withheld) from the war zones in the Southwest Asia (Iraq et al). I am both Jewish and African American. I cannot thank you enough for your words of encouragement and for the Military Religious Freedom Foundation (MRFF) standing so strong by my side. Only a person like you and your foundation, the MRFF, who have been fighting for religious freedom for Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines for years now would understand the indescribable pain and mistreatment that individuals are compelled to endure because of inequity, prejudice, bigotry and insularity in their own military chain of command. It is almost impossible for civilians to comprehend.

Mikey, when the military investigated my complaint about the egregious wrongs of my commander and command group, the investigation was fatally, shockingly tainted from the onset. After initially confirming with me that I was indeed Jewish, the investigator, full Colonel (name withheld) unbelievably stated to me, "Well you know that the Jews killed Jesus... and Jews don't believe in the Messiah..." Mikey, I should not have had to defend my Jewish religious beliefs during my initial interview with Colonel (name withheld) (The officially assigned U.S. Army Investigating Officer). I was literally in shock when he said those horrific, old school, anti-semitic things to me about my Jewish faith. And HE was the senior officer whom the Army picked to "investigate" my claims of terrible mistreatment and wrongdoings?

Mikey, when subordinate white leaders like Lieutenant Colonel (name withheld) of (Battalion number withheld) Battalion, (military unit number withheld) Field Artillery Commander can tell white and black officers to pose in front of a confederate flag because he wanted to send this confederate flag organization a thank you photo for sending his unit some cigars and go unpunished, of course the results of my investigation will not come back in my favor. Soldiers fear for reprisals if they were to make an Equal Opportunity complaint or any complaints. They are right; just look what happened to me



I knew that when I filed my formal complaint, it would be an uphill battle. However, I did not realize how dirty the battle would play out. My statements in my sworn statements I stand by because they are true. I realize now that it doesn't matter about the truth, it is what you can prove and about people telling the truth and coming forward about the truth.

In light of the significant religious and racial oppression I'm currently faced with, I can barely recall now the euphoria and pride I felt when I won one of the United States Army's most prestigious awards; the General Douglas MacArthur Leadership Award, just a few years ago. This honor directly led to my White House meeting with then President George W. Bush. I was on top of the world and so loved the Army. But now that is all lost and gone. I feel very defeated. I feel lost and drifting. My career in the military is very limited now. I will not be promoted due to the outcome of the tainted investigation which fed into my poor Officer Evaluation Report. I probably will not be able to serve any more than (number withheld) years. I thought the system would vindicate me, but instead it has failed me. Now, I am considered the evil guy, the bad guy, and the guy who needs to be eliminated from the military. I am light years away from that White House meeting with The President and just a husk of the celebrated Army officer who won that Douglas MacArthur Leadership award. Yet I am still that very same man. Why has this happened to me, Mikey?

I see why people don't complain. I see why people keep silent. Maybe I should have been that person too, to keep quiet. I know those people did those things to me. I know I am telling the truth. However, if people don't tell the truth and withhold the truth and information, what can I do? NOTHING!!!! Exactly...

Now, I feel so very alone and helpless. I don't know about the future for my family since my wife is a full time student. I have (number withheld) children and my wife is pregnant with our (number withheld). I am the sole financial supporter for the family. My future seems so uncertain.

If I would have known the investigation would be so biased from the start and the outcome would have turned out like this, I strongly believe I would not have filed. I would have continued to take the mistreatment and suffering for the benefit of a stable job.

Mikey, you reminded me of a quote from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.: "In the end we remember not the words of our enemies but the silence of our friends. And there comes a time when silence becomes betrayal." Dr. King was right. You were right to call my attention to his quote. THAT is why I have come forward to fight this tyranny. I will not betray my oath the United States Constitution. I will not be silent in the face of this religious/racial prejudice.

I did not do anything wrong to these people. Why did they not help me? Why did they not support me? Why have they persecuted me so viciously? Because I'm Jewish? Because I'm African American? Both? Why did they LIE! WHY? Like all the other MRFF clients facing this evil bigotry, I have no place left to turn except to you and MRFF for help in my most desperate hour of need. Please help me and my family, Mikey.

Regards,

(U.S. Army Infantry Officer's name, rank, MOS, combat unit and military installation withheld)

Infantry Officer, United States Army (cell: xxx-xxx-xxxx)



Dear Mr. Weinstein,

I am writing to tell you about what is happening at Travis AFB, California. For the past few weeks and throughout the holiday season, the command at Travis has decided to display a very large Nativity scene, featuring Mary, Joseph, and the Baby Jesus, on the main corner of the base. It is nearly impossible to come onto the installation without seeing it. Travis serves a population of over 122,000 active duty, reservists, dependents, and retirees, who will drive past that scene to get anywhere on base. At night, the scene is illuminated by three, very large, very bright flood lights. This past week, the command put up a menorah next to the Nativity. The presence of these clearly religious displays on the main corner of the base deeply concerns me. I am not alone in my feelings of distress. I know many other people are similarly offended and confused.

I am an Airman who is new to the Air Force, and I have a very proud military heritage. Many members of my family have been in the military, serving our country in over four wars. My parents came to visit me at Travis recently. They were so proud that their child had joined such a prestigious and selfless profession. They wanted to see the base where I was going to forge the beginnings of my career of service to my country. When my parents excitedly drove onto the base, they thought they would see my workplace, the airplanes, or even the beautiful landscaping, but the first thing they noticed was the Nativity. My father, having retired from the military, was very disappointed. He was distraught that he had raised me in a secular environment, and he thought he had sent me off to serve in a secular military.

I know that the military exists to support and defend the Constitution of the United States. Contained within that Constitution is the right to freedom of religion. It appears as though the military endorses Christianity and religion in general. I am well aware that Christians are the majority religion, but I also thought that the Constitution existed to protect the minority from the tyranny of the majority. Thousands and thousands of brave men and women have fought and died for the principles embodied in the Constitution, regardless of their religion. The military should never endorse a particular religion, or even indicate that military members should be religious at all. The place for religion is in the base chapel, where someone can choose to visit, not on the corner of the main street, where everyone has to see it.

Mr. Weinstein, please help me because I don't have a voice. I am scared to say anything for fear that my new career will come to an end if I object to my commanders. I hope to live up to my family's honorable legacy by continuing to serve my country for a long time. I joined the military to support and defend the Constitution of the United States, not to spread the gospel. I fear that the religious symbols so prominently displayed on my Air Force Base convey a different message.

Thank you.

(MRFF Asset's name, USAF rank, position, and title withheld)



Mr. Weinstein,

I just wanted to send you this e-mail asking for your help with our out here at Travis AFB. I am sure that you know about the Nativity scene that was out up by the Chaplain by now. I wanted to tell you how the scene was put up, and what it looked like from the perspective of someone on base.

When the Nativity was first put up, it was the only thing for a few days. Gradually the other invited squadrons put up Christmas cards along side it. For a while it was standing by itself. Also the Nativity scene is one of the few that are lit up at night, there are a few other Christmas cards that have lights, but the Nativity scene is the only one with three gigantic light illuminating it. Later, after several other Christmas cards were put up, the Menorah was added in what was seemingly an afterthought. The Nativity scene is defiantly taller and larger than the other cards, and although there are other displays along side it none of them are three dimensional. One is left to wonder why there are rules imposed on the squadrons cards, but not the plastic Jesus. Would a three dimensional fully lit, and larger display from another worldview be tolerated?

I understand that this issue is very emotionally charged. I just want to emphasize that I have no problem with plastic Jesus when displayed properly. My wife is Christian and I currently have a nativity scene in my house displayed where everybody can see it. This is not the issue. The problem is the favoritism that is applied to the religious displays. Can't the plastic Jesus be moved two blocks over to the chapel lawn!? Is it so hard to ask for the government to stay out of religion? Isn't that what the founding fathers said when they stated that the government should not establish any state religion? Can't people understand it is not the religion we have a problem with it is the favoritism!?

Afghanistan had a government that endorsed religion also. I wonder sometimes, how the religious people in this country would feel, if the base had instead put up a large three dimensional Buddha or Mohamed statue, and lit it up from three sides while all the other displays were limited.

Very respectfully yours,

(name withheld)



I contacted the Military Religious Freedom Foundation this week, for a problem I was having at my workplace. I was being told that I had no other choice than to attend certain religious events, or I would be reprimanded. I only wrote one email and I was contacted directly by Mikey Weinstein, immediately the next day . We discussed the matter and he distinctly and promptly guided me on how I should handle the situation. After following his advice, my leadership had a very sudden and immediate change of heart. Suddenly, I no longer had to attend any events that offended me religiously and they even offered to find programs that would be suitable for me. I just wanted to send this note to thank Mikey Weinstein for all of his help. I am greatly pleased that he gave me the useful information that I needed quickly and that the problem was able to be resolved so quickly because of it. It was also great to know that he was so willing to help me defend my civil rights and take the situation as seriously for me as if it were his own.

Regards,

(name withheld)



Thank you for bringing the inappropriate biblical references by the commander of the Defense Information Systems Agency to light. There were many employees who were uncomfortable with this, but could not speak publicly for fear of adverse career actions. In terms of the big picture, this negative propagando is less likely to be used in the future and put our troops are risk for being viewed as holy warriors refighting the crusades.

Sincerely

(name withheld)



Hey Mr. Weinstein,

Today was the first day I've ever heard a USAF Academy teacher talk about you and the foundation in a positive light. I just wanted to let you know and maybe put a smile on your face. Cadets here don't understand what you do because you're so demonized so he kind of shed more light on it. I wish there was some way that they could actually see your work for regular airmen not on what you do around the school. Hope all is well

(name withheld)



Just want to anonymously thank you for the work you do. Though short, my time in the Air Force was contaminated by colonel after colonel cramming his version of Jesus into subordinate's faces. And if Airmen, like myself, didn't talk to the bosses about the sermons we were listening to on our iPods during PT or comment positively on the praise music blasting from his office, we were viewed as good-for-nothing heathens and our every action scrutinized (because clearly we must be getting into trouble on our off-duty time). Conversely, those that played along were given choice assignments and were taken under the boss's wing, receiving more mentorship and training, awards, and recognition (and oddly enough, this was in a LEGAL office). I was raised in an evangelical home in Texas but firmly believe in separation of Church and State, ESPECIALLY in the military. Unfortunately, I understand why no Airmen ever step foot into the Equal Opportunity Office—it's career suicide. Thank you for being a voice of reason and justice.

(name withheld)



Dear folks:

Enclosed find a donation in support of your very important work. I wish it could be more, but I will send what I can afford from time to time.

In my opinion you are completely correct with what you are trying to do. I cannot imagine a more frightening situation than religion combined with any military. We see that in many places in the rest of the world and the picture is grim.

Also, you deserve kudos for pointing out that this nation was not founded upon Christian principles and the attempt of certain groups to ram religion down the throat of government and to re-write the Constitution as a religious document is one of the most unsettling things I have seen in my 73 years. Unfortunately, with enough repetitions and said loud enough, those lies are going to become "truths" which everyone will believe.

Good luck with your work.

Sincerely,

(name withheld)

P.S. I saw the article on your organization in the Austin American-Statesman.



Thank you Mikey for addressing and staying on focus this malignant blight that has been plaguing our military since the Reagan era. As a former Religious Programs Specialist for the Navy, I had plenty of opportunities to see the nasty political side of the various religious groups—all vying for DOD dollars. After four years of it, as I watched the right-wing fundamentalist nuts begin to monopolize and terrorize, I decided GOD could take care of them in his own time and maybe save the Constitution and the Democracy. Well Mikey, you the closest thing to God I've seen in 30 years! ;) Thanks for your efforts to expose this sinister cabal.

(name withheld)



Mikey,

I recently just finished your book, and I gotta say I never knew how much you and your family give every day and the hardships all of you endure protecting our freedoms. It was good to get more depth and detail on stories I've seen on the MRFF's home page, and to see a little more of your character and see that there is a lot in common between us.

Thank you again for personally signing my copy, it is something I will cherish for a long time.

And as a former resident of Indiana, I am glad to see the swift response you and the MRFF gave concerning Gen. Umbarger! Again thank you, your dedicated staff, family and friends for all you do and sacrifice for all of us.

V/R

(name, rank, and U.S. Air Force installation withheld)



Mikey and staff,

Good work – keep it up. I just really discovered MRFF with the news regarding outgoing Norman Schwartz. As a fellow zoomie ('79) this hits close to home. While I didn't notice or recognize the extent of the problem while I was at USAFA, it has certainly drawn attention in later years.

Sending 100 bucks your way – if there is anything else I can do, let me know. Again, outstanding work...

(name withheld)



To the MRFF,



Keep up the great work. I almost fell out of my chair laughing so hard a couple of times reading through the newsletter. Its great. Thanks for trying to protect the Republic from well itself sometimes!

Very Respectfully

(name withheld)



Mr. Weinstein, those of us who feel manipulated and bullied by Christian triumphalists, whether in the armed services or not, are fortunate to have in you one of our most eloquent and intrepid champions of unabridged citizenship rights for religious moderates, nonsectarians, and nonbelievers. In your public appearances and writings, you stand comparison with the most forceful defenders of Constitutional liberty, and the settled norms of democracy, in...our...history. Eternal vigilance was the watchword of the Founders, to which we must necessarily add eternal advocacy. Thank you for meeting the challenges we face so fearlessly, and so brilliantly.

Gratefully,

(name withheld)



This message is intended for Mr. Mikey Weinstein. Thank you in advance for making sure that Mr. Weinstein receives this message.

Dear Mr. Weinstein:

Recently, I was involved in a conversation on Facebook with a friend and some of his other respondents regarding a topic that touched upon the theme of uber-Christian

evangelization and its encroaching on the civil rights and freedom of others. A friend of that friend pointed me to an article online that spoke of you and your organization, and its efforts to combat such persecution in the US military. That friend of the friend then told me he had another friend who would graciously send me copies of your two books, *With God On Our Side* and *No Snowflake In an Avalanche*, for free if I wanted them. I accepted the offer, the books were sent, and as of this morning, I have finished reading both of them.

Words fail me in searching for an adequate response. I would like to say that I enjoyed the books, but that seems inappropriate given how horrifying the situation discussed continues to be. I did find the books riveting (despite some small quibbles with the writing style, which I won't go into) and I am appalled that not only has the situation described come into existence, in direct defiance of the Constitutional prohibitions against it, but also that, upon being confronted with it, that those in power in our Armed Forces are proving to be so intractable in regards to stopping it.

You and your Foundation are doing important work and I hope that you will continue to do it. I myself identify spiritually as Polytheist, and the things that you and your family, and your clients, have had to endure go beyond outrageous.

Regrettably, I am currently unemployed and thus cannot become a paid member of your Foundation, which I hope I can change at some point in the future. I wish you and yours all the best in your continuing battles, and I wish I could do more to help besides joining you in spirit.

Nevertheless, I felt that the least I could do was to remind you that your efforts are appreciated by those of us who aren't already mind-controlled by the Christian cultists out there.

May all the Gods and Goddesses bless you.

(name withheld)



Hello, my name is [name withheld] and I'm a 17 year old from South Florida. My father graduated the Air Force Academy in 1977, with Mikey. I recently watched several interviews with Mikey and some radio hosts. I just wanted to see if you could tell Mikey how much I respect him and how surprised I am that some of these radio hosts can be so inane and unintelligent. In one interview with Jesse Lee Peterson, I witnessed how wrong some people can be. Mikey was attacked and insulted for being correct about his views. I was very impressed with the way Mikey responded except I just felt way too angry, that people could get away with attacking him like that. Personally I am a Agnostic-Atheist, and I have similar religious beliefs to Mikey, and I am strongly against all of the religious fundamentalists. It pleases me to see people like Mikey and your organization fighting the religious oppression of people in the military and the entire country. I would just like you to realize the impact your organization has had on me and how proud I am that there are people like you making this country a better place. Thanks and continue the great things your doing.