

FAITH U.S.

City sued for demanding photographer violate faith

Yet another fight over 'nondiscrimination' ordinances that promotes the LGBT minority



By WND Staff

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(Image courtesy Pixabay)

Stop me if you've heard this one.

Oh wait, you HAVE heard this one.

Because it's happening all over.

The newest situation where a local "nondiscrimination" demand is creating issues because of its claim to be able to force Christians to violate their faith in order to do business comes from Louisville, Kentucky.

Such situation already have erupted in Oregon, New Mexico, Colorado, California and dozens of other locations. Bakers, photographers, florists, video makers and calligraphers have been targeted, so far.

The situation, according to the Alliance Defending Freedom, which is working on behalf of photographer Chelsey Nelson and her Chelsey Nelson Photography, is that "Louisville law ... forces her to use her artistic talents to promote same-sex wedding ceremonies if she photographs and blogs about weddings between one man and one woman."

"The Louisville law also forbids [her] from publicly explaining to clients and potential clients through her studio's own website or social media sites the religious reasons why she only celebrates wedding ceremonies between one man and one woman. Louisville considers such 'communications' as indicating that services will be denied or that someone's patronage would be 'objectionable, unwelcome, unacceptable, or undesirable' because of sexual orientation," ADF reported.

It was the U.S. Supreme Court that created the dispute, when it fabricated several years ago the idea of same-sex marriage. That opinion, according to the chief justice, was unrelated to the Constitution.

The opinion purported to assure Americans that those who believe in traditional marriage, a foundation of society for millennia, still would be protected. But Justice Samuel Alito, at the time, wasn't convinced.

"I assume that those who cling to old beliefs will be able to whisper their thoughts in the recesses of their homes, but if they repeat those views in public, they will risk being labeled as bigots and treated as such by governments, employers, and schools," he warned.

That's what's happening, according to the new case.

Explained Kate Anderson, senior counsel for the ADF, "Artists shouldn't be censored, fined, or forced out of business simply for disagreeing with the government's preferred views,. The government must allow artists the freedom to make personal decisions about what art they can and can't create.

"No matter one's views on marriage, we all lose when bureaucrats can force citizens to participate in religious ceremonies they oppose or to speak messages they disagree with. On countless other topics, photographers and other artists can freely choose the stories they tell. Chelsey simply asks for the same freedom."

Officials for Louisville declined to respond to a WND request for comment.

The ADF said its action is a "pre-enforcement challenge," which lets citizens raise objections to city threats to their rights.

"The U.S. Court of Appeals for the 8th Circuit and the Arizona Supreme Court recently ruled in favor of artists and filmmakers who brought similar pre-enforcement challenges against laws like Louisville's. ADF attorneys are asking the court to halt enforcement of the law against Nelson and her business while her lawsuit proceeds," the ADF said.

"Every American, including photographers and writers, should be free to peacefully live and work according to their faith without fear of unjust punishment by the government," added ADF Senior Counsel Jonathan Scruggs. "Chelsey serves all people. But Louisville is trying to compel Chelsey's speech, force her participation in ceremonies she objects to, and eliminate her editorial control over her photographs and blog. It's unlawful to coerce an artist to create messages against her will and intimidate her into silence just because the city disagrees with her beliefs."

The case is pending in U.S. District Court for the Western District of Kentucky.

It explains the city law violates the U.S. Constitution, including the First Amendment's Free Speech and Free Exercise clauses.

ADF said, "The complaint indicates that an online directory lists 91 photographers in Louisville and 314 photographers in Kentucky who will photograph same-sex weddings—many of whom express support for same-sex marriage by posting statements promoting same-sex marriage on their websites and by displaying photographs of same-sex weddings on their websites, blogs, and social media sites."

There have been at least 15 cases – based on the 2015 Obergefell decision by the U.S. Supreme that established a right to same-sex marriage – in which Christians have been prosecuted for running their wedding-related businesses according to the principles of their faith.

That's even though that original opinion claimed to assure: "Many who deem same-sex marriage to be wrong reach that conclusion based on decent and honorable religious or philosophical premises, and neither they nor their beliefs are disparaged here."