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# Pro-life teens win settlement after HS official told them to 'go to hell,' mocked Jesus and Bible

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Pro-life teenagers, who were belittled and shouted at by assistant principal Zach Ruff, are vindicated after a settlement defended the pro-choice teens' liberty of free speech. (Image source: YouTube screenshot)

The Alliance Defending Freedom, a conservative legal group, released a [statement](http://www.adfmedia.org/News/PRDetail/10335) (<http://www.adfmedia.org/News/PRDetail/10335>) Thursday announcing that they received a settlement on behalf of two religious teenagers who were excoriated by a school official at STEM Academy in Downingtown, Pennsylvania, over their pro-life protest staged outside the school.

The [incident](http://www.theblaze.com/news/2017/04/28/hs-official-screams-at-teen-pro-life-activists-i-dont-give-a-f-what-you-think-jesus-tells-me/) (<http://www.theblaze.com/news/2017/04/28/hs-official-screams-at-teen-pro-life-activists-i-dont-give-a-f-what-you-think-jesus-tells-me/>) occurred April 21 when the Zach Ruff, the school's former dean of academics and student life, was caught on video screaming and cursing at two teenage pro-life activists, trying to prevent the teens from talking to students and the public along the street outside the high school.

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Video of the incident was shot by one of the teens, Conner Haines, who stood on a sidewalk outside the school along with his sister Lauren. Both of them held pro-life signs and were attempting to raise awareness for pro-life policies.

In the video, Ruff can be seen approaching the duo and threatening to call the police if they refused to leave. After Conner refused, Ruff began standing in front of the teens in an attempt to shield exiting students from seeing the protest.

Conner attempted to speak to Ruff about his stance against abortion, but Ruff repeatedly shut Conner down.

“Sir, these are image bearers of God,” Conner said in the video, referring to photos of an aborted fetus.

Ruff responded, “You can go to hell, where they are, too.”

After engaging further, Conner suggested that Ruff turn to Jesus Christ for salvation, and Ruff did not take the advice very well.

“Listen here son, all right?” Ruff said, standing just inches from the teen’s face. “I’m as gay as the day is long and twice as sunny. I don’t give a f\*\*\* what you think Jesus tells me and what I should and should not be doing.”

Calling the Bible a “book of fiction,” Ruff added that Conner “and Trump can go to hell.”

Ruff, in an attempt to distract the parade of children passing by from noticing the altercation, began singing at the top of his lungs.

When Conner began addressing the passing motorists and pedestrians, evangelizing for his Christian faith, Ruff interjected and began shouting, “Public school, we don’t believe in that here!”

After being placed on administrative leave for his behavior, Ruff resigned (<http://www.theblaze.com/news/2017/05/12/hs-assistant-principal-caught-on-video-screaming-cursing-at-teen-pro-life-activists-has-resigned/>) his position at the science-based school in May.

Alliance Defending Freedom shared a July 7 letter on Thursday from the school district, acknowledging that Ruff violated the students’ rights to protest.

A portion of the letter stated:

You had every right under our Constitution’s First Amendment to speak and display signs like you did, and that right was violated by Dr. Ruff. Rest assured that Dr. Ruff’s actions do not represent the policy of the School District.

Alliance Defending Freedom also wrote:

The Downingtown Area School District has agreed to clarify its administrative policies to ensure that public sidewalks surrounding its schools are open to free speech. As part of a settlement to avoid being sued in court, the Philadelphia-area school district will take immediate steps to prevent incidents like the one that occurred in April when a 40-year-old administrator physically intimidated and shouted expletives at two teens, who were peacefully expressing their pro-life views on a public sidewalk near the school.

ADF senior counsel Kevin Theriot added, “No government employee — especially someone with authority over students — should harass or threaten anyone for exercising their First Amendment protected freedoms in public.”

Theriot continued:

Conner and Lauren Haines were peacefully expressing their pro-life views, holding signs, and talking to those passing by. The bullying and verbal abuse that Zach Ruff inflicted on Conner and Lauren, as documented in the video, made a policy clarification critically necessary, not only for the Haineses, but also for everyone in the Downtown community. We commend the district for doing the right thing to prevent this from ever happening again.

Here’s the original video (***Content warning: Rough language***):

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