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WORLDNETDAILY

**BRAVE NEW SCHOOLS**

## Christians kicked off campus at Brown University

### Civil rights group challenging decision to eject Presbyterian fellowship

Posted: November 18, 2006

1:00 a.m. Eastern

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A [civil rights](#) organization has joined forces with a Christian student group at [Brown University](#) in an attempt to find out why the school has banned the Christians from meeting on its campus.

"A [university](#) that respects its students cannot capriciously suspend [student](#) groups," said Greg Lukianoff, the president of the Foundation for Individual Rights in [Education](#). "Suspension of any student group is a serious matter and should be accompanied by a serious explanation. Yet Brown has consistently skirted questions about the suspension, calling into question both the university's motives and the legitimacy of the punishment."

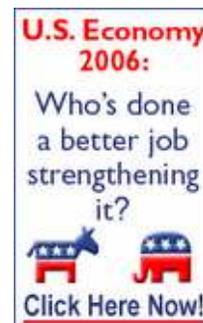
FIRE said the members of the Trinity Presbyterian Church campus fellowship had sought from [school](#) officials an explanation for the punishment. After being offered varying and shifting reasons, they sought help from FIRE in trying to obtain the information.

As WND as reported, the move by Brown comes just weeks after [Georgetown University](#) notified a group of evangelical Christian organizations, such as InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, they would no longer be allowed to operate on campus. The university said it was going in another "direction" but never explained more fully.

*(Story continues below)*



FIRE President Greg Lukianoff



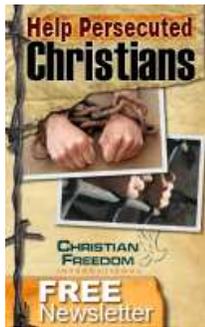
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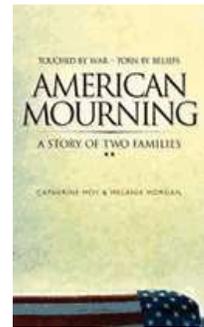
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The [Alliance Defense Fund](#) wrote a letter to Georgetown asking for reconsideration of its ban on several Christian groups. Officials said no response was received.

Those in a position to know have reported that the Christian groups were booted from campus for being too evangelical, because student clubs promoting Muslim and Jewish beliefs were allowed to continue existing within the formal campus structure.

Now comes the move by Brown to eject the meetings involving nearly 100 students, and the varying explanations the school has offered, according to [FIRE](#).

The first apparent word of trouble was in September when Janet Cooper Nelson, of the school's Office of the Chaplains and Religious Life, sent the fellowship's leaders an e-mail explaining it was suspended because of "non-compliance with University policy and procedure."

She alleged Trinity Presbyterian Church, the sponsoring body, "has withdrawn its sponsorship."

The difficulty there was that Trinity Senior Pastor David Sherwood immediately responded that the church "has not, in any sense, withdrawn its sponsorship." In fact, he said, the group's leaders and students "do a fantastic job of equipping the rising generation of student leaders."

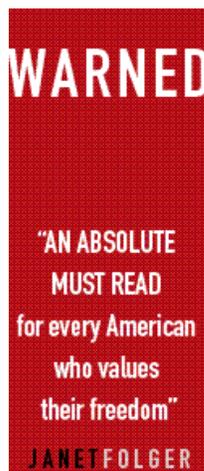
Then Allen Callahan, an associate chaplain at the school, explained that a form that was submitted late meant that the group "had not been a 'recognized student organization' since the fall of last year."

However, officials also noted there was no suspension in place at that time, and in fact the group retained the right to reserve meeting space throughout the school year.

Callahan then offered the accusation that the group "had become possessed of a [leadership](#) culture of contempt and dishonesty that has rendered all collegial relations with my office impossible."

So the students asked for an explanation of the "culture of contempt and dishonesty" but did not get a response.

On the [FIRE website](#), Tara Sweeney wrote that student groups "should not exist at the mercy of administrative caprice... Brown



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University encourages its students to forge their own path, famously telling them that at Brown, 'you will be challenged to define liberal education for yourself.' But students whose definition includes membership in this evangelical Christian fellowship are just out of luck."

When FIRE got involved, the civil rights group got a statement from Russell Carey, an interim vice president of campus life, that he would personally "mediate" the issues, "with the goal of ending the suspension.:

"Over the years FIRE has seen too many examples of administrators treating religious groups in an unjust manner. All students - religious and otherwise - deserve fair treatment," said Samantha Harris, the organization's director of legal and public advocacy.

"We hope that Brown will take seriously its promise to revisit the suspension and reach a decision that shows respect for students of faith."

"It's the students who lose out in this situation," said Pastor Sherwood. "It's hard to imagine that anyone's involvement in this organization could be anything but beneficial."

A number of other universities also have taken action to dismiss various Christian organizations, and have faced legal action because of their decisions. Most of those cases have had to do with the Christian organizations failing to follow school "diversity" plans because they require their leaders to be Christian.

FIRE is a nonprofit education foundation. It works with civil rights and civil liberties leaders, scholars, journalists and others on behalf of individual rights, due process, freedom of expression and academic freedom at colleges and universities across the country.

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