



FACT SHEET

People of the State of New York v. Raven

ABOUT People of the State of New York v. Raven

On June 23, 2007, Julian Raven and six others entered Wisner Park to pray for the participants of an event celebrating homosexual behavior. Wisner Park is a public park opened to all, and materials advertising the event noted that all were invited and that it was open to the public. The group walked into the event, with heads bowed, and silently prayed on the ground in an area not occupied by anyone. The group specifically chose this method as they wanted to communicate their message in a peaceful, non-threatening manner. A police sergeant, however, had told Julian Raven that he and the five others with him were not allowed to “cross the street, enter the park, or share their religion with anyone in the park.” Despite the peaceful manner in which the group entered the park, they were arrested for “disturbing the peace” within minutes of entering the park. At a February 2008 trial, a New York court sentenced the Ravens, along with two others, to a \$100 fine. Each member of the group was also ordered to pay court costs. The court convicted the group on charges of disorderly conduct even though the officer who was present at the time of the arrest testified at trial that the group’s actions were peaceful.

CURRENT STATUS OF People of the State of New York v. Raven AS OF 11/04/09

On March 14, 2008, ADF attorneys filed an appeal on behalf of four of the Christians. ADF Senior Legal Counsel Joel Oster will argue before a New York county court Nov. 5 that the group should never have been arrested and that the charges against them should be dismissed.

FOCUS OF HEARING – WHAT IS AT STAKE?

The First Amendment right to free speech and religious freedom is at stake. Christians should not be arrested simply for exercising their constitutional free speech and religious expression rights in a public park. If this violation of these Christians’ rights is allowed to stand, the First Amendment rights of all people of faith are in jeopardy.

CONTACT

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ABOUT ADF

ADF is a legal alliance of Christian attorneys and like-minded organizations defending the right of people to freely live out their faith. Launched in 1994, ADF employs a unique combination of [strategy, training, funding, and litigation](#) to protect and preserve religious liberty, the sanctity of life, marriage, and the family.

ABOUT Joel Oster

Joel L. Oster serves as senior legal counsel with the Alliance Defense Fund at its Kansas City Regional Service Center in Kansas, where he plays a significant role in litigation efforts defending church autonomy and Christians in the public square. Before joining ADF in 2004, he earned his J.D. from the University of Kansas School of Law. Oster is admitted to the bar in Kansas, Missouri, Florida, and numerous federal courts. He has been practicing law since 1997.