

## **Republican Perspective**

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### **Of Beer and Wedding Cake**

It is hard to imagine a more devout and dedicated person than one willing to give his life for his religion. Brahim Abdelsam was one of the November 13 Paris suicide bombers. Despite his unquestionable commitment to Islam, he apparently felt no scruple against selling alcohol. When Abdelsam wasn't busy being a suicide bomber, his day job was saloon keeper. Abdelsam operated Le Beguines, a bar in Brussels.

Mahad Abass Mohamed and Abdkiarim Hassan Bulshale were drivers for Star Transport in Morton, Illinois. Star Transport hauled, among other products, beer. The drivers were not required to drink, smell, touch, or otherwise make contact with the beer. Just to deliver it. The two drivers, citing adherence to Islamic law, refused to make beer deliveries. So Star fired them.

At this point the full force of the United States Government came down upon Star Transport. In behalf of Mohamed and Bulshale, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission---financed by you and me---brought suit against Star for religious discrimination. The EEOC's position was that Star should have reassigned Mohamed and Bulshale. Of course non-Muslim drivers would also have to be reassigned in order to cover the beer routes. Never mind that this might have been disruptive for the non-Muslim drivers---in the battle of religious privilege, they are unarmed.

The EEOC prevailed in their lawsuit against Star Transport, winning \$240,000 for Mohamed and Bulshale. Star went out of business.

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Aaron and Melissa Klein owned Sweet Cakes by Melissa, an overtly Christian bakery in Gresham, Oregon. The Kleins were asked by a same-sex couple to provide a cake for their wedding ceremony. Because of their religious beliefs, the Kleins denied the request.

The Oregon Labor Commissioner, who apparently has jurisdiction in such matters, ordered the Kleins to pay \$135,000 in damages to the same-sex couple. Gresham has several bakeries and is a suburb of Portland, which has plenty. The same-sex couple could have gotten their cake elsewhere, but apparently targeted Sweet Cakes by Melissa because of the Kleins' religious beliefs.

The \$135,000 was a prohibitive amount for the Kleins' small business. And in any case the \$135,000 would not be the end. It would surely be followed by

subsequent similar rulings, as other same-sex couples would line up to request and be denied services at Sweet Cakes by Melissa. So Sweet Cakes went out of business.

The Kleins did manage to recover some of their loss through the website GoFundMe, but were kicked off the site following complaints by same-sex marriage supporters---is there no end to their vindictiveness? The Kleins' financial difficulties continue: the loss of their bakery, the related legal expenses, and the continuing persecution by the activists.

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Seventh Day Adventists, Christian Scientists, and Mormons all have religious prohibitions against drinking alcohol. But they don't, as a rule, refuse to serve a customer who orders a beer---even in Utah. To accept as genuine Mohamed and Bulshale's religious scruples, you have to assume they are more religious than Brahim Abdeslam the suicide bomber and saloon keeper. But let's just accept Mohamed and Bulshale's claim of religious scruple at face value. Likewise, let's accept the Kleins' refusal to participate in honoring a same-sex union.

In the case of the Muslim beer truck drivers, the U. S. Government stepped in to defend their religious convictions and crush Star Transport in the process. Meanwhile, what arm of government came to the defense of the religious convictions of the Kleins? None, of course. To the contrary, the weight of government fell upon them and, in effect, put them out of business and ruined them financially.

So here are two examples of the conflict between religious conscience and the law. Muslims and gays appear to be the winners. Entrepreneurs and Christians---not so much.