

## **Dramatic distortion of the meaning of religious freedom**

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*Politics*

Religious freedom seems to be the new rallying cry for the political and religious right. A couple of disturbing articles -- in [The Washington Post](#) and on [PoliticalResearch.org](#) -- take a look at what is being called dominionism and which is at the core of the Ted Cruz campaign for president.

Among the ideas embraced in this understanding is the notion that the United States was founded as a Christian nation but has since fallen away from those ideals. Christianity must be restored, and that means like-minded Christians need to take control of, or dominate, the seven mountains of culture. Those mountains include government, religion, media, family, business, education, arts and entertainment. This dominant Christian force then needs to institute Old Testament biblical law and punishments.

The articles point out that Ted Cruz's father, Rafael Cruz, is a traveling evangelist who has promoted such theology. When the younger Cruz speaks of religious freedom on the campaign trail, this is what he is talking about.

We are also seeing signs of this movement at the state level. Religious freedom laws are being passed. A total of [19 states](#) have some form of the law, and new laws are being passed relative to the Supreme Court decision on same-sex marriage.

What is it that these laws are seeking to accomplish? The Ted Cruz understanding of religious freedom and the goal of these laws that are cropping up at the state level bear no resemblance to what the U.S. Constitution has said about religious freedom in the first amendment. What Cruz and others in the movement are seeking to do is to carve out religious exemptions to the legal requirement of recognizing the civil equality of gays, lesbians and others -- even other Christians who disagree with them. In short, they are not seeking religious freedom. They are seeking the right to discriminate against any class of people that they disagree with.

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Let's take the [Mississippi law](#) which has just been passed and [signed into law](#) as an example. One thing that is clear is that it represents an overt effort to discriminate against individuals. The law essentially says that a business can put up a sign that says it refuses to serve gays or lesbians or even straight individuals it sees as living in sin. The [North Carolina law](#) has similar provisions.

On a more subtle level there is the effort of the Catholic church to prevent any of their employees from receiving coverage for contraceptives. It is couched as a demand for the free practice of religion, but in fact the goal is to deny coverage to hundreds of workers in hospitals, schools, etc. The church has seriously overreached on this issue. They were given an accommodation but they would rather fight. It is just plain silly to contend their religious freedom is violated if they have to let the government know that they are opposed to providing contraceptive coverage to their employees.

Now the [Supreme Court is offering a suggestion](#) to avoid further court action. Will the church take this opportunity, or have they joined the dominionism band wagon? Do they, too, want to install their own religious law in the United States of America? I remember when Baptists and other religious groups railed against this possibility during the 1960 presidential campaign of John F. Kennedy.

This dramatic distortion of the meaning of religious freedom in this country also raises the question of who is the most dangerous presidential candidate campaigning today -- Donald Trump or Ted Cruz?