

Catholicism's Bull Dog: Bill Donohue Pulls No Punches, Lambasting NYC Mayor Mamdani on Religious Freedom

Bill in the News (Lighthouse Faith Podcast): Bill discusses New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani and his first days in office on Lauren Green's "Lighthouse Faith" podcast. To listen, click [here](#).

RESPONSES TO CHURCH INVASION ARE ALARMING

[Bill Donohue](#)

The church invasion that took place at Cities Church on January 18 in St. Paul, Minnesota was a flagrant violation of constitutional law, federal law and common decency. It is the kind of behavior associated with totalitarian regimes, not democratic polities. Yet the outcry from all quarters—government, religious, civic, educational, the media—has been miniscule. To say this is a bad omen is a gross understatement.

The purported cause for action was to register disapproval of David Easterwood, one of the pastors of this Southern Baptist church; he heads the local office of the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

Those who want to voice their opinion about any member of the clergy associated with any religion have a First Amendment right to do so outside the house of worship. No one has a right to disrupt church services and harass its congregants. To do so violates the "free exercise of religion" provision in the First Amendment, the congressionally passed Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act (FACE) of 1994 and the Ku Klux Klan Act of 1871.

The FACE Act makes it illegal to injure, intimidate or interfere with those seeking to exercise their religious liberty right at a place of worship. The Klan Act makes it illegal to terrorize people or to deprive them of their constitutional rights through intimidation or force.

Nine of the 20-40 church invaders are being charged with entering the church "in a coordinated takeover-style attack," and for engaging in "acts of oppression, intimidation, threats, interference, and physical obstruction." The indictment, filed in the Federal District Court of Minnesota, alleges that "the pastor and the congregation were forced to terminate the Church's worship services," and had to flee out of fear for their safety.

One of the defendants, William Scott Kelly, a.k.a "DaWokeFarmer," disrupted the church service by screaming, "This ain't God's house. This is the house of the devil." He got in the face of a mother and her two young children, chiding her for not supporting the church invasion. He said to child congregants, "Do you know your parents are Nazis? They're going to burn in hell."

Much has been made of the presence of Don Lemon. The former journalist and failed CNN pundit (he was fired for sexist behavior and remarks, as well as lousy ratings), claims he was a disinterested observer, and not part of the organized protest. "I'm not a protester, I went there as a journalist." Inside the church, he said, "We're not part of the activists,

but we're here just reporting on them."

The indictment says otherwise. Lemon met at a shopping center with all the other defendants to make plans about invading the church. He did not just stumble on the scene of the crime. Instructions were given by Nekima Valdez Levy-Armstrong and another female on how the operation would be conducted once inside the church.

Lemon told his livestream audience that congregants were "frightened," "scared," and "crying," saying their response was understandable given that their experience was "traumatic and uncomfortable." Perversely, he admitted that this was the purpose of the invasion. He also tried to intimidate the pastor and obstructed congregants from leaving the church. In short, he was an active participant in the church invasion.

The list of politicians, all Democrats, and civil rights organizations, all left-wing, that have nothing but contempt for the right to worship is astounding. This should be the lead story in every media outlet, yet it is being treated as a side story. To read a sample of these responses, click [here](#).

Notice that none of them even give a nod to the egregious violation of the "free exercise of religion." They are framing this as purely a free speech issue when it is first and foremost a matter of religious freedom. But religious liberty has never been of any interest to the Left, and many have actively sought to disable it.

In response to this incredible assault on religious liberty, the Catholic League is embarking on a four-prong campaign:

- We are asking the public to support Rep. Buddy Carter's House Resolution 1026, condemning the church invasion
- We are contacting President Trump's Religious Freedom Commission asking them to make this issue a priority
- We are contacting the Department of Justice asking them not to back off in their efforts to bring the offenders

to justice

- We are asking President Trump to support funding for enhanced police protection of Christian churches

In our correspondence with the Religious Freedom Commission, the Department of Justice and President Trump, we will stress the fact that almost all homicides that have occurred in recent times in houses of worship have been in Christian churches.

In a [study](#) released by two criminologists studying violence against houses of worship in the United States between 2000 and 2024, it was found that “Ninety-seven percent of deadly incidents occurred at Christian churches.” This settles the issue—Christian haters are a major threat that demand immediate attention.

Offer your support of the House Resolution by contacting the chief of staff to Rep. Buddy Carter (R-GA):
chris.crawford@mail.house.gov

UNMASKING MAMDANI’S ANTI-ICE “VOLUNTEERS”

[Bill Donohue](#)

When we think of volunteers, we think about men and women who give of themselves for the benefit of those in need. Neighborhood volunteer firefighters, those who work for free in hospitals, many of those who give blood—there is a long list of noble causes served by volunteers. Some of those causes were later institutionalized—the March of Dimes started as a voluntary organization.

That is why New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani's idea of "volunteers" is bogus: he is assembling a well-organized band of left-wing activists to impede law enforcement, under the false pretense of recruiting volunteers.

On January 15, members of the New York City Chapter of the Democratic Socialists of America (NYC-DSA) met at the New York headquarters of the Communist-tied The People's Forum to discuss mobilizing a "rapid response" team—an army of 4,000 activists to stop the presence of ICE in the city. The members discussed plans to train 2,000 DSA members, and 2,000 non-DSA members. The meeting was run by the Immigrant Justice Working Group of the NYC-DSA.

NYC-DSA regularly holds what they call "Know Your Rights" training sessions, the purpose of which is to teach activists how they can defend themselves in interactions with ICE. In a "Know Your Rights Training & Rally" held in December, it sought to provide more information on its "Rapid Response Priority Organizing Project," and to teach DSA members how they "can plug into citywide networks supporting our communities through coordination, resource sharing, trainings, reporting, and relationship-building."

One of those running these training sessions is Leemah Nasrati. She is a member of the Immigrant Justice Working Group and serves as a pro-bono attorney for Catholic Charities in New York.

In terms of vetting and recruitment of non-members, the "rapid response" team will need to be cleared through a DSA encrypted messaging service. DSA members are recruiting in neighborhoods with high immigrant populations, such as Bushwick and Jackson Heights.

Regarding funding, little has been said about who exactly is funding the cost of this "rapid response" project. NYC-DSA relies almost exclusively on member dues for its funding; the

dues range from \$15/month to \$50/month. In addition, the national level of DSA has a program in which members can donate up to three percent of their income. Dues from all chapters are given to the national headquarters; the funds are then allocated back to the local chapters based on the size of the chapter and the average percentage contributed.

As mentioned, NYC-DSA hosted their meeting at The People's Forum, a group with ties to Communist China. It describes itself as "a political education and cultural center" that "aims to support and provide space for movements and organizations to build unity across historic lines of division here and abroad." Its meeting rooms are adorned with photos of known terrorists, such as Che Guevara and Fidel Castro.

According to the Capital Research Center, the People's Forum is a "self-described Marxist socialist group" that "plays a central role in pro-terrorism networks linked to the Chinese Communist Party." It was involved in organizing several pro-Palestinian protests, most notably protests at Columbia University and the City University of New York. It is heavily funded by Neville Roy Singham, an extreme left-wing billionaire who has ties to Communist China. He is referred to as a "Marxist comrade" by The People's Forum.

In other words, Mamdani is falsely claiming to organize volunteers. He is doing nothing of the sort: he is assembling hard-core activists, with ties to Communist-affiliated groups so they can disable ICE. It is naïve to think otherwise.

Contact Mamdani's Deputy Communications Director, Lekha Sunder: LSunder@cityhall.nyc.gov

SECULAR AND RELIGIOUS LEFT FLIPPING OUT

[Bill Donohue](#)

The difference between the secular and religious Left is infinitesimal—they have more in common than what separates them. The latest example is the [positive response](#) from Americans United for Separation of Church and State to the election of Zohran Mamdani as Mayor of New York City, and the [negative response](#) from the *National Catholic Reporter* to J.D. Vance's defense of ICE.

Americans United was founded in the 1940s as an expressly anti-Catholic organization. The *Reporter* is a dissident paper founded in the 1960s that rejects the Church's teachings on marriage, the family and sexuality.

Americans United never gets excited when a Catholic, Protestant or Jew takes office, but now that Mamdani is running New York, they are in a state of eudemonia. Why are they so happy? Because he has no use for Catholics or Jews? That's not what they say, but they sure don't hold him accountable for his bigotry.

Mamdani represents religious diversity, they say, which is why they are so glad. Actually, there is little evidence that he is a practicing Muslim—he rejects many core Islamic teachings. No matter, anything that departs from our Judeo-Christian roots is something Americans United likes, and that explains why they heralded his decision to take the oath of office twice—on two different Qurans.

What is fascinating about Americans United is its discovery of anti-religious bigotry. This needs to be qualified: it has never complained about anti-Catholic bigotry, and has indeed been a major contributor to it. The only anti-religious

bigotry it objects to is not even bigotry—it objects to criticism of Muslim politicians such as Mamdani, Rep. Ilhan Omar, Rep. Rashida Tlaib and Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison.

What a lousy choice. None of their heroes has condemned the October 7, 2023 slaughter of 1,200 innocent Jewish men, women and children. Indeed, Mamdani blamed Israel, not Hamas. Omar and Tlaib have a long record of incendiary comments bashing America and Israel, and Ellison recently justified the invasion of a Christian church by anti-ICE zealots.

The *Reporter* is up in arms over Vice President J.D. Vance for criticizing the maniacs who have taken to the streets of Minneapolis trying to stop law enforcement from doing their job. It never once addressed the root cause of the controversy, namely the decision by President Biden to allow 15 million people to crash our borders, taking advantage of our schools, hospitals and welfare system, some of whom have murdered, raped and robbed.

Astonishingly, Vance is slammed for criticizing those agitators who are doxing ICE agents, as if it is okay to publicly identify where these men and women live. Worse, their family members are being outed as well, setting the table for harassment, or worse. And the *Reporter* has the gall to condemn Vance for choosing MAGA over Jesus. No, he is choosing to do his job, and that has nothing to do with rejecting Jesus.

The *Reporter* is delighted to quote a woman who called Alex Pretti a “martyr of charity.” Was he expressing his charity when he spat at ICE agents and smashed their trucks a few days before he was shot? We know that when he was shot he bought a gun to the “protest” and was carrying 63 bullets. Was he there to do charitable work? Whether or not he should have been shot will be determined by an investigation, but it is downright absurd to call him a martyr. He was an agitator who sought a confrontation with law enforcement.

“It is time for Catholics to choose who our master is. Do we serve Donald Trump? Or do we serve Jesus?” Too bad they didn’t ask Catholics that question when Biden was promoting abortion, disparaging marriage, sanctioning child-abuse (e.g., transgender operations on minors), and encouraging illegal aliens to invade the United States.

Americans United and the *National Catholic Reporter* are cut from the same cloth. Their allegiance is not to religious liberty—it is to a radical agenda that undermines the moral foundations of American society. If only they were honest about their true intentions, they could at least be admired for that. But they fail on that count as well.

TRUMP’S RELIGIOUS FREEDOM DAY FREAKS ATHEISTS

[Bill Donohue](#)

On January 16, President Donald Trump forever declared this day to be Religious Freedom Day, honoring the central place that religion has played in anchoring our freedoms. He specifically cited the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom, which was codified on January 16, 1786; it is the foundation of the First Amendment.

Only someone who holds an animus against religion would find fault with Trump’s statement. Enter the militant atheists from the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF). They detest it, declaring it to be a “Christian nationalist manifesto.”

As I have said many times, “[Christian nationalism](#)” is a bogeyman, a term invented by those who seek to curb the

influence of Christianity in American life. But FFRF is nonetheless right to target Christianity: the United States was founded exclusively by Christians, resting their convictions on Judeo-Christian tenets. It was not founded—this has to be said—by those who belong to Eastern religions or by pagans, and it certainly wasn't founded by atheists. Lucky for them, they are the beneficiaries of our Judeo-Christian heritage.

FFRF is angry at Trump because he “repeatedly invokes ‘God-given rights.’” If anything, Trump could be criticized for downplaying this verity. Has FFRF read the Virginia Statue for Religious Liberty? It should not do so standing up.

It begins by acknowledging that “Almighty God hath created the mind free.” It pays homage to the “Holy author of our religion, who being Lord both of body and mind,” further recognizing “his Almighty power.” That makes what Trump said tame.

FFRF hates to admit that the Founders were right to maintain that our rights do not come from government—which can take them away—but from God. They are therefore inalienable, not subject to whim.

The Virginia law emphasizes conscience rights above all. None of us “shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship, nor shall be enforced, restrained, molested, or burthened in his body or goods, *nor shall otherwise suffer on account of his religious opinions or belief...*” (My emphasis).

This speaks to the “free exercise of religion” provision in the First Amendment. FFRF likes to emphasize the first part, not the latter, which I italicized. It never mentions the “free exercise of religion,” preferring to talk about the “Establishment Clause” (which is not a clause). It cites this provision to advance its cause of protecting “the constitutional wall separating church and state.”

But there is no wall. Jefferson wrote the Virginia law, and he never said anything about this mythical wall. He mentioned this phrase years later in 1801 in a letter he wrote to Baptists in Danbury, Connecticut stating his support for federalism. He wanted no federal laws governing religion, but he said nothing about state-sponsored churches, which existed until 1833. Moreover, he used the phrase “separation of church and state” to guarantee religious liberty, not to curtail it.

Madison secured adoption of the Virginia statute on religious liberty, and he wrote the First Amendment. When asked what he meant by the establishment provision, he said there could be no state church (as they had in England), and the government could not show favoritism of one religion over another. That was it. He most emphatically rejected the idea that there should be a separation of church and society, which is what FFRF wants.

The “wall of separation between church and state” appears nowhere in the U.S. Constitution or the Bill of Rights. It found its way into constitutional law in 1947 when Justice Hugo Black broached it in the *Everson v. Board of Education* decision. Black wanted to make sure no public funds directly went to Catholic schools. This made sense given he was a former member of the Ku Klux Klan. He joined the Klan not to condemn blacks or Jews, but Catholics.

We are proud of Trump’s promotion of religious liberty. Without it, we would not enjoy the freedoms we take for granted, FFRF protestations to the contrary.

A Crisis of Catholic Fidelity at Notre Dame

Bill Donohue highly recommends this article by Fr. Wilson D. Miscamble. He is delighted that we are disseminating his piece to our subscribers. To read the article, which originally appeared on *First Things*, click [here](#).

THE “WALL OF SEPARATION” MYTH

[Kyle Nazareth](#)

As America nears its 250th anniversary, fierce disputes over religion in public life increasingly stem from a [widely accepted](#) myth: that the First Amendment erected a rigid “wall of separation,” forcing government to shun any cooperation, accommodation, or recognition of religion. This narrative, pushed by judges, advocacy groups, and cultural lore, treats religion like radioactive waste to be quarantined from civic spaces.

Consider Americans United for Separation of Church and State (AU), the nation’s leading advocate for strict church-state separation and a group with [anti-Catholic roots](#). It goes beyond opposing an official state church, demanding a “naked public square” where religion is limited to private beliefs. When faith enters the public realm via equal access to government programs for religious schools, accommodations for believers, or government officials using religious language, AU and its allies raise alarms. [They insist](#) this “wall” reflects the Constitution’s original meaning: essentially, freedom *from* religion. But that’s a modern secularist

invention—a constitutional canard grafted onto the First Amendment—not what the Founders intended in 1791.

The Constitution's text mentions no "wall of separation." The First Amendment states simply: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." The phrase "wall of separation" originates in Thomas Jefferson's 1801 letter to the Danbury Baptists, penned fourteen years after ratification. Jefferson wasn't even present for the drafting; he was in Paris. His letter is an interesting bit of history, but not an authoritative constitutional hermeneutic. Courts largely ignored it for decades. Even Chief Justice William Rehnquist [deemed](#) Jefferson a "less than ideal source" for the clause's original meaning.

Catholics have particular cause for wariness of Jefferson; he scorned biblical miracles as a "dunghill" and called priests "enemies of liberty." More crucially, the First Amendment's meaning shouldn't hinge on a belated metaphor from someone absent from its drafting and ratification.

To understand the Establishment Clause properly, examine its text and Founding-era context. At the time, [nine states](#) had established or state-supported churches; Massachusetts retained its established church until 1833. The clause served mainly as a federalism safeguard: It barred *Congress* from creating a national church or interfering with state religious establishments. Religion remained in the domain of the states, permitting public acknowledgment and collaboration; a far cry from today's supposed blanket prohibitions.

James Madison, who actually drafted the First Amendment, [viewed it](#) this way. [Scholars](#) from diverse perspectives—Robert P. George, Akhil Reed Amar, Steven D. Smith, Kurt T. Lash, Carl H. Esbeck, Daniel L. Dreisbach—and Supreme Court justices like [Clarence Thomas](#) and [Potter Stewart](#) concur: It was a federalism provision, not a mandate to purge religion from

public life.

Aggressive “no-contact” separationism arose later, driven by anti-Catholic sentiments. As law professor Philip Hamburger explains in [Separation of Church and State](#), post-Civil War theological liberals and American nativists saw Catholic immigration and hierarchy as dangers to American individualism. They repurposed “separation” as a weapon against “popery,” fighting funds for Catholic schools and churches’ public influence. This prejudice, later echoed by groups like the Ku Klux Klan in the name of American “liberty” and “rights,” elevated Jefferson’s phrase into a patriotic sword and shield.

By the 20th century, this ideology had infiltrated the law. In 1947’s *Everson v. Board of Education*, the Supreme Court applied the Establishment Clause to state and local governments for one of the first times, embedding Jefferson’s “wall of separation” in legal precedent. Justice Hugo Black—a former Klansman—proclaimed it “high and impregnable,” forbidding direct government support for religion. Justice Wiley Rutledge’s [private notes and correspondence](#), written after the justices met to discuss the case, exposed the true agenda: keeping Catholic influence out of public schools. *Everson* entrenched separationism, fueling decades of rulings that disadvantaged Catholic and other religious institutions.

AU, founded that year as “Protestants and Other Americans United” [in response to *Everson*](#), claimed the Court hadn’t discriminated enough against Catholics. It pushed an even more extreme “no-aid” policy: no generally available government benefits for religious groups, even basics like police or fire protection.

This “wall of separation” dogma isn’t a timeless constitutional truth; it’s a modern secularist fabrication, forged in anti-Catholic bias. It inverts the First Amendment, pitting the Establishment Clause against the Free Exercise

Clause. As Professor Mary Ann Glendon notes, these clauses “were meant to work together in support of a single value: religious freedom. The framers of the Constitution considered religion to be a great public good to be carefully protected.” By reclaiming the First Amendment’s original federalist meaning, we can return to what Professor Richard Garnett [calls](#) “freedom for religion”: a public square where faith is valued, accommodated, and even supported.

St. John’s University again refuses to approve Turning Point USA

Bill in the News (The College Fix): The university “has been trending secular” though it “once [was] a bastion of traditional moral values,” Bill Donohue said. He is the president of the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights. His group “defends the right of Catholics – lay and clergy alike – to participate in American public life without defamation or discrimination.” He said Guerriero and other students should “petition the president, Father Brian Shanley, to demand in writing why they were denied.” “They should also contact the alumni office—the graduates of St. John’s need to know how their alma mater has changed,” Donohue said. [READ MORE HERE](#)

TREATING BLACKS AS INFERIOR

[Bill Donohue](#)

Scenario:

The Jones family lives in apartment 3A in an inner-city neighborhood, populated by non-whites. On a Friday night, they hear a child in 3B screaming his head off, begging the attacker not to hit him again. But the yelling and crying escalate. Mrs. Jones calls the city's child services unit, alerting them to this dire situation. She does not leave her name for fear of reprisal.

New York State Gov. Kathy Hochul says Mrs. Jones is the problem, not the abused child. Indeed, she believes Jones is fomenting racism. That is why she recently signed a law making anonymous tips to the Administration for Children's Services illegal. She says what Mrs. Jones did helps drive "inexcusable racial disparities that disproportionately impact Black and Brown families by leading to unnecessary interactions with child welfare services."

It does not matter to Hochul that black children are more than three times as likely to die of abuse and neglect than white children. Nor does it matter to her that the data show that anonymous tips are very reliable and lead to *more* children being saved. Even more bizarre, it does not matter to her that those who leave anonymous tips about minority children being endangered are typically of the same racial and ethnic group. To be blunt, Whitey does not live in 3B.

Hochul's mindset is the problem, and it is one that is shared by left-wing theorists and activists across the country. They believe that racial disparities are a function of discrimination, though they make an exception when it comes to sports: there is no problem with having an all-black basketball team. But when it comes to academic achievement, if

blacks do poorly vis-a-vis whites and Asians, instead of helping them do better, they attack the test. They do so because they sincerely don't believe blacks can do better.

Oregon led all states in developing "equity education." Because academic achievement standards, namely testing, revealed racial disparities, the state declared war on testing. A few years ago, it suspended the graduation requirement for math, reading, and writing until the 2027-2028 academic year. It did so in the name of "equity."

"Equity," however, means fairness, and it is manifestly unfair to blacks that their white liberal teachers and administrators have totally given up on them, choosing to kill the test rather than helping them pass it. Black parents, we have seen from other studies, resolutely believe in testing, otherwise, they say, how do they know if their child is succeeding or not.

New York City has embraced "equity education." Educators did away with Regents exams as a condition of receiving a diploma, choosing instead to evaluate students on such attributes as "cultural competence," whatever that means. They have made it almost impossible for students to fail.

Students who are chronically absent obviously do not do well in school, but that doesn't bother white liberals such as former New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio. What bothered him was teachers keeping tabs on attendance; blacks were more likely to be absent than whites.

De Blasio "solved" this problem by eliminating "seat time" as a requirement to pass. His black successor, Mayor Eric Adams, made attendance optional, proving that black liberals have also given up on black students. The result: four in ten low-income and minority students are chronically absent. Many can't read, write or do arithmetic.

Those who run Catholic schools and charter schools place

demands on their students, regardless of race or class. They succeed because they treat blacks as equals. Something novel.

When I taught in a Catholic elementary school in Spanish Harlem, a public school teacher who occasionally taught remedial subjects to struggling students took issue with me for rejecting a homework assignment from one of my students because the paper she turned in was ripped from a coiled-ring loose-leaf binder. The jagged edges, I said, were unacceptable.

The teacher told me that we can't expect anything different from these students because they come from a bad neighborhood. I know about the neighborhood, I replied—I spend more time in it than you do, I said. Then I asked her if she would accept such a sloppy homework assignment from a white student in a middle-class neighborhood. She just stared at me.

This teacher, and legions like her, would bristle at the mere suggestion that they are racists. But their refusal to hold blacks to the same standards as everyone else, demanding proficiency, is demonstrably racist in effect, if not intent.

The same is true of Hochul. Her major concern is the *appearance* of racial disparities, not the underlying reasons for them. In this case, it means more black kids will be beaten and abused now that anonymous tips are rejected.

Low expectations breed low demands, which yields low performance. When they are selectively employed on the basis of race, it smacks of racism. If only Hochul and her ilk treated blacks as equals, and not as inferior, we would have a shot at achieving real racial equality.

St. John's student group blocks Turning Point USA from opening chapter after Charlie Kirk assassination

Bill in the News (New York Post): Critics said the refusal of St. John's to open a Turning Point USA chapter at its Queen campus smacks of liberal bias and cancel culture run amok.

"Charlie Kirk was an advocate for civil discourse on campus. That was his trademark," said Bill Donohue of the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights.

"Why any school, especially a Catholic one, would find fault with that boggles the mind. St. John's idea of inclusion clearly extends to the LGBTQ cause, but not the cause of free speech. [READ MORE HERE](#)