



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on July 4, 2013

Calif. Univ. Officials Apologize After Student Told to Remove Cross Necklace

Stifling religious expression has sunk to a new low at California's Sonoma State University. According to the [Liberty Institute](#), a Texas-based legal advocacy group, on two separate occasions a university official told Audrey Jarvis, a 19-year-old student working at the school's freshman orientation, that she must remove or hide a cross necklace, explaining that the religious symbol might offend another student.



Jarvis, a liberal arts major, was working for the university's Associated Students Production (ASP) organization, manning a student orientation fair, when the supervisor told her that the university system's chancellor had a policy against wearing religious items, and said the cross necklace "might offend others, it might make incoming students feel unwelcome, or it might cause incoming students to feel that ASP was not an organization they should join," recounted Liberty Institute. But it didn't just happen once. The supervisor approached Jarvis a second time, asking her to put the cross under her clothing or remove it — a suggestion that so angered the student that she left her job early.

Jarvis told [Fox News](#), "My initial reaction was one of complete shock. I was thrown for a loop." She added, "I believe as a Christian woman it is my prerogative to display my faith any way I like so long as it is not harming anyone else. I was very hurt and felt as if the university's mission statement — which includes tolerance and inclusivity to all — was violated."

Hiram Sasser, a Liberty Institute attorney who is working with Jarvis to resolve the issue, told Fox: "It's amazing in this day of diversity and tolerance on university campuses that a university official would engage in this type of obvious religious discrimination."

He added that it's ironic "there are university officials out there who think that it's okay to tell Christians to hide their faith, but would cringe if somebody said the same thing about hiding someone's pride in whatever political or cultural affiliation they may have."

Sasser said California law clearly indicates that "state employees may wear crosses while they are performing their duties as long as the wearing does not interfere with the employees' duties or harm the employer's business interests."

As for the university, its PR department is doing damage control, with spokeswoman Susan Kashack acknowledging that the supervisor was "completely wrong" to ask Jarvis to remove her cross. "Someone who works here was concerned that the cross might be off-putting to students who are coming to campus for the first time," she explained to Fox, but "it was absolutely an inappropriate action for him to make that request of her."

Kashack emphasized that Sonoma State University's president Ruben Arminana was "was very upset" about the incident, "and asked me to contact Miss Jarvis and give a profuse apology."

Added the university spokeswoman: "Things like this don't happen here. It's very unusual. People here are very aware of discrimination. It's possible that political correctness got out of hand."



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