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Heart & Mind Strategies

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HazteOir.org (Spain)

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Movieguide

BRIAN BROWN
National Organization for Marriage

BEN BULL
Alliance Defending Freedom

DR. ALLAN CARLSON
The Howard Center

SILVIO DALLA VALLE
Defense of Christian Values (Italy)

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Family Research Council

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Americans United for Life

THE WORLD CONGRESS OF FAMILIES

To Set the Record Straight

“Casting disagreement as a physical attack or ‘hate speech,’ or any host of socially taboo behaviors, has become a central tactic in an ever expanding campaign to silence speech...The illiberal left hunts down heretics, dissidents, and run-of-the mill dissenters to not only silence them, but make examples of them for the rest of society....Dissent from liberal orthodoxy is cast as racism, misogyny, bigotry, phobia, and, as we’ve seen, even violence....With no sense of irony or shame, the illiberal left will engage in racist, sexist, misogynist, and homophobic attacks of their own in an effort to delegitimize people who dissent from the ‘already decided’ worldview...The illiberal left sees its bullying and squelching of free speech as a righteous act.”

Kirsten Powers, *The Silencing: How the Left is Killing Free Speech*

For almost a quarter century, the World Congress of Families (WCF) has been the premier international gathering of scholars, ecclesiastical leaders, parliamentarians, and advocates of the family, as defined in the United Nation’s [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#). Recently, however, the organization has come under increasing attack from groups like the [Human Rights Campaign](#), [People for the American Way](#), and the [Southern Poverty Law Center](#), which has put the Congress on its official “Hate Watch” list.

WCF invites you to carefully review these accusations, which seem to be growing progressively more strident as, for the first time ever, WCF will host a Congress in the United States of America in October, with Salt Lake City as the venue. See for yourself how these activist organizations are taking statements out of context and extrapolating conclusions, as well as attempting to hold WCF accountable for pronouncements made by individuals who have no official relationship with the organization.



Attempts have been made by WCF to meet with these groups to engage in an honest dialogue, but requests have been denied. An [open invitation](#) has been extended for them to participate in the Congress to no avail. Likewise, requests have been made for these organizations to correct their misleading statements, but those requests have been ignored. For these reasons, WCF is issuing this fact check document and encouraging all who may have questions to investigate. In addition, we are providing an interactive process to receive and respond to questions you may have about the almost 20-year record of the Congress and its mission and work.

An accurate understanding of WCF begins with the following basic organizational tenets:

- The World Congress of Families affirms that the natural human family is essential to the welfare of society, as its most fundamental unit.
- The natural family is defined by marriage, procreation, and, in some cultures, adoption.
- The natural family is sustained by a life-long commitment made by covenant through marriage.
- Governments have a responsibility to protect and support the family.
- The World Congress of Families is transparent in its platform and objectives, all of which can be found on the WCF website (at <http://worldcongress.org/about/purpose>), and it cannot be defined by the pronouncements and opinions of the numerous individuals who associate with the organization—just as any organization, political or religious, should not be defined by the diverse and sometimes inappropriate opinions of those who participate with them.
- The World Congress of Families is comprised not only of broad interfaith and political membership and participants but of some of the world’s leading scholars, government leaders, and other pro-family groups and individuals.
- The agenda of the World Congress of Families is affirmed in Article 16 of the United Nation’s Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

As these facts make evident, WCF has a positive agenda: to promote the welfare of the natural family. Through academic studies, faith-based doctrines, and government research, the Congress promotes principles and practices that sustain and encourage the natural family. Issues include marital commitment and divorce, finances and socio-economic stability, child rearing and development, human trafficking and pornography, substance abuse, cohabitation, government regulation, and family/work time management. These and other issues are studied and presented in terms of impact upon, and consequence to, the natural family.

To the extent that some within the LGBTQI community have an agenda that undermines the natural family, this would raise concern and elicit reaction from participants within the Congress and most likely an official position by the WCF coalition itself. WCF would defend this same right for other groups defined by a common interest seeking to promote their own missions, but in this position WCF is no more anti-LGBTQI than it is anti-bachelor. Yet, hostility toward WCF and its leaders from groups like People for the American Way, the Human Rights

Campaign, and the Southern Poverty Law Center seem to imply that being pro-natural family must mean hatred and antipathy toward those within the LGBTQI community. Nothing could be further from the truth. As thoughtful adults, individuals are free to make their own personal lifestyle choices. WCF advocates for that freedom, just as it does for the rights of individuals to worship how they choose and to participate in government and civil discourse—including the defense of the natural family.

Children, communities, and society at large have been nurtured for millennia by the natural family, the most basic social unit. Marriage and the natural family predate government and are essential not only to its establishment and sustenance, but to the welfare and future of society, the strength of economies, and the health and security of the whole. Marriage and the natural family were not established by government and therefore cannot be redefined by government. WCF explores and advances the benefits to children, adults, and societies that come from the natural family. While advocating this family structure and its benefits, the Congress recognizes and explores other family situations, seeking in all cases to improve outcomes for children, adults, and societies. The Congress welcomes all participation and open discussion toward these ends.

With this as a foundation, it is clear that some gap may always exist between the objectives of WCF and those of the Human Rights Campaign, People for the American Way, the Southern Poverty Law Center, and other progressive organizations. We acknowledge these differences but believe that honest discussion of such vital issues must be conducted with civility and transparent engagement rather than misleading accusations and politically correct shorthand. In an effort to establish a baseline understanding for such a discussion, this fact sheet sets the record straight and welcomes vigilant research and earnest inquiry:

What is the World Congress of Families?

A project of The Howard Center for Family, Religion, and Society, the World Congress of Families is the largest international gathering of scholars, ecclesiastical leaders, parliamentarians, and other proponents of the natural family. Current WCF International Secretary, Allan C. Carlson, Ph.D., noted family historian, author, and president of The Howard Center, founded WCF in 1995. To date, there have been seven World Congresses:

- WCF I – Prague (1997)
- WCF II – Geneva (1999)
- WCF III – Mexico City (2004)
- WCF IV – Warsaw (2007)
- WCF V – Amsterdam (2009)
- WCF VI – Madrid (2012)
- WCF VII – Sydney (2013)

- WCF VIII was scheduled to take place in Russia, but was cancelled due to events in Ukraine.

The Congress has also held more than 25 Regional Events in the following locations:

- Manila, Philippines
- Lagos, Nigeria
- Abuja, Nigeria
- Madrid, Spain
- New York, NY
- Washington, DC
- Phoenix, AZ
- Vancouver, BC
- Port of Spain, Trinidad
- Santa Cruz, Bolivia
- London, UK
- Riga, Latvia
- Tbilisi, Georgia
- Moscow, Russia
- Ulyanovsk, Russia

WCF IX, scheduled for October 27-30, 2015, in Salt Lake City, Utah, will be the first Congress in history to take place in the United States. Each Congress is shaped by a local host committee, with a unique theme, and issues its own declaration.

Does the World Congress of Families lobby?

No, the World Congress of Families does not lobby. It has consultative status at the United Nations as a special non-governmental organization to the Economic and Social Commission. As a project of the Howard Center for Family, Religion, and Society, the mission of WCF is to:

- provide sound scholarship and effective strategies to affirm and defend the natural family, thus renewing a stable and free society;
- articulate and promote a morally sound natural family worldview that can serve as a reliable guide to culture, law, and public policy;
- encourage primary research on natural family themes;
- provide open communication involving scientific research on the family, grassroots interests, and religiously motivated engagement on family issues; and
- rally an effective global voice in favor of the natural family that will counter the destructive elements within the emerging international “post-family” culture.

Is the World Congress of Families a religious organization?

No, the World Congress of Families is not a religious organization and has no religious affiliation or statement of faith. While critics may try to frame it as "Evangelical" or part of the "Christian Right," WCF includes participation from religions and diverse organizations throughout the world, including Catholics, Protestants, Jews, Mormons, Muslims, Hindus, and others. It also includes scholars from leading universities and think tanks, parliamentarians and prominent international leaders, and other individuals and organizations advocating for the welfare of the natural family. Currently, some 42 organizations in 14 countries, on five continents, are affiliated partners and work with pro-family leaders in more than 80 countries.

Who speaks for the World Congress of Families?

Each Congress issues an official declaration, which addresses both global and local concerns at that time. These reflect the views of delegates to specific Congresses, and all declarations are published and available to anyone. The World Congress of Families also has its official [declaration](#). These are the only official pronouncements and positions of the organization. While WCF supports and encourages free speech and honest inquiry from all sides, it would be as unfair to hold it accountable for the pronouncements of any one participant or member as it would be to hold a political party or religious denomination responsible for the opinions or declarations of any of its members.

What is the World Congress of Families' position on marriage?

Marriage between a man and woman, by covenant and for the procreation of children, predates governments. It is a lifelong union of one man and one woman, raising their children in a loving and nurturing environment. It is necessary not only for the welfare of families and communities, but for society overall. Consequently, and as per the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#), governments have a responsibility to protect marriage. Sexuality is a fundamental and blessed part of marriage, necessary not only for procreation, but for strengthening and sustaining the bonds between husband and wife. As such, sex should be confined to such unions.

Does the World Congress of Families believe natural families are best for children?

Yes, each child desires and deserves a mother and a father. Natural marriage has been proven best for children, society, and the state. Overwhelming research shows that children raised by their biological parents have a much lower incidence of crime, drug and alcohol abuse, and mental illness. Experience shows and research confirms that those not benefiting from being reared by their biological parents are more likely to experience a host of negative effects, such as dropping out of school and becoming sexually active at an early age.

Is the World Congress of Families anti-homosexual?

No. The World Congress of Families promotes a positive agenda focused on the welfare of the natural family. A conflict arises when radical elements attempt to undermine the natural family, but WCF still recognizes the right of adults to engage in consensual sexual relations. Likewise, individuals and communities have the right to protect their families, property, and community from activities that they believe may have an adverse impact on them.

Why is the World Congress of Families on the list of “hate groups” by the Southern Poverty Law Center and others?

The Southern Poverty Law Center, the Human Rights Campaign, and People for the American Way are leading progressive organizations advancing the LGBTQI agenda, which includes same-sex marriage. As part of their agenda, these groups attempt to marginalize individuals and organizations they believe stand in the way of their objectives, dismissing them with single-word epithets rather than engaging in constructive and open dialogue of robust, fact-based research, analytics, and honest exploration of outcomes.

For example, the World Congress of Families was placed on the list of “hate groups” by the Southern Poverty Law Center as part of a report by Mark Potok and Heidi Beirich concerning a campaign in Belize to fight the [decriminalization of sodomy](#). WCF had no role in the Belize campaign and was never mentioned as part of the campaign. Another example of Potok and Beirich’s overreach is when they cited WCF as one of “Six U.S. Anti-Gay Groups Abroad,” falsely accusing it of “laud(ing) the government of Uganda’s efforts to pass its infamous ‘kill the gays’ bill’ in its [April 2009 newsletter](#).” However, WCF did no such thing, and we welcome in-depth scrutiny of the record.

The Human Rights Campaign, People for the American Way, the Southern Poverty Law Center and others draw liberally on each other’s research and designations, often attempting to hold WCF responsible for the statements and actions of speakers, presenters, and anyone else who associates with—or even once associated with—the organization. This is as disingenuous as holding the Southern Poverty Law Center directly responsible for the actions of gunman [Floyd Lee Corkins II](#), who confessed to attacking the Family Research Council headquarters because the organization was also on the SPLC’s list of “hate groups.”

Did the World Congress of Families have any involvement in promoting Uganda’s law to criminalize homosexuality?

No. The World Congress of Families neither encouraged nor supported the Ugandan law that criminalizes homosexuality. WCF has never had a meeting in Uganda, and none of our officers have spoken there on any topic. The only association with Uganda has been the occasional news story reported in WCF newsletters, but the stories were reported objectively, without editorial comment.

How about involvement with Russia's anti-propaganda law?

The World Congress of Families has organized two Demographic Summit conferences and worked in Russia to help mothers promote the natural family, protect human life, and eliminate abortions. The New York Times reports that such work in Russia is necessary, "an admirable goal, given the toll that multiple abortions have taken on the health and fertility of Russia's women." This has been the extent of any involvement by WCF in Russia.

The organization had nothing to do with enactment of the Russian Child Protection Law (passed in 2010; amended in 2013). WCF has attempted to correct misconceptions about the Child Protection Law, incorrectly referred to as the "homosexual propaganda law" by the media, explaining that it is aimed solely at protecting minors from dangerous influences including drugs, alcohol, tobacco, gambling, prostitution, heterosexual pornography, and solicitations for "non-traditional sexual relations"—which carry increased risks (as shown by statistics from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC]). The law provides only a civil penalty for violations. The English translation of the law can be viewed here.

Why do anti-family militants call WCF "hateful" for defending the natural family and opposing their agenda?

Stigmatizing and resorting to epithets in a way that shuts down constructive discourse, engaged debate, and honest analysis is a political weapon. The objective is to silence dissent. As Democratic strategist Kirsten Powers explains in her bestselling *The Silencing: How the Left is Killing Free Speech*, "The relentless stereotyping and demonizing of people who oppose same-sex marriage has paid enormous dividends for the illiberal left. Their views have seeped into the culture to the point that many people think that denying same-sex marriage opponents the right to speak about their views is acceptable."

Opposing anything sexual radicals support, or supporting anything they oppose, is automatically called hateful. Thus, according to anti-family proponents, opposing gay marriage is hateful; opposing abortion is hateful; opposing poorly written hate crimes laws which stifle free speech is hateful; defending the Boy Scouts against the admission of openly gay adult leaders is hateful; opposing language-corruption (e.g., replacing "husband" and "wife" with "spouse #1" and "spouse #2" on government documents) is hateful; noting that sexually transmitted disease is rampant among homosexuals is hateful (which would, in turn, make the CDC hateful for documenting the phenomenon); opposing bathrooms and showers that are open to both sexes (to accommodate the gender-confused) is hateful ... the list is seemingly endless and growing all the time.

Irresponsible and unfounded charges of malice are part of a deliberate strategy to avoid any discussion of issues on which there are legitimate differences of opinion. As far as sexual radicals are concerned, there's nothing to talk about—the debate is closed. As Powers writes:

The illiberal left reserves a special strain of strident wrath for manifestations or protections of Christian belief in America. Resistance to same-sex marriage is arguably the belief the illiberal left finds most offensive. It's certainly one of the primary battlefields on which the war on free speech is being waged. The illiberal left has worked hard to convince Americans that opposing same-sex marriage is so inherently immoral that the opposition must be brutally suppressed. Demonizing is their favorite tactic for silencing disagreement with their position. The illiberal left justifies this demonizing by comparing people who oppose same-sex marriage to segregationists. But dehumanizing and hating black people went hand in hand with segregation. This is not true of opposing same-sex marriage. As we've seen with Pope Francis, it is more than possible to hold an orthodox view of homosexuality and respect and love gay people. If the illiberal left spent more time with orthodox Christians they would understand that Pope Francis is not an outlier. It's easier for the illiberal left to demonize their opponents and sanctify themselves as higher moral beings than treat differences of opinion respectfully. The goal is to make their opponents' view illegitimate. It's a tried-and-true debate-ending tactic.

Kirsten Powers, *The Silencing: How the Left is Killing Free Speech*

Has the World Congress of Families ever advocated violence?

Absolutely not. The societal importance of the natural family is supported by the experience of history, scientific research, worldwide cultural traditions, and people of diverse religious faiths. The World Congress of Families advocates tolerance, transparency, constructive engagement, and honest dialogue. It supports the sanctity of life and the right to free expression and has never encouraged or condoned violence against any individual or group.

An Invitation and Call to Action

As we approach the World Congress of Families IX in Salt Lake City, we ask all fair-minded people to engage in honest dialogue on what we believe is the seminal issue of our time—the future and welfare of the natural family and the rights that both children and society have to the stable and constructive foundation provided by that most basic but powerful unit. We welcome earnest inquiry and participation.

Pro-gay marriage advocates have been invited to participate in the October event, to share research, and engage in constructive dialogue. An interactive question and answer process has been added to the wcf9.org website and can be found at the end of this fact sheet, should anyone have additional questions. For the sake of truth and fairness, we particularly ask members of the media to look at the facts before simply parroting an opposing organization's opinion. WCF representatives will be available at all times to answers questions that cannot be

found here. We welcome the opportunity to discuss these issues in any honest forum seeking to establish the facts and ask that an inquiry be made before accusations are leveled, gross fabrications are repeated, or media stories filed.

Honest and well-intentioned people can differ on issues, as well as basic beliefs and religious convictions, through rigorous debate, civil discussion, and the respectful exchange of ideas. An understanding of truth eventually emerges, as long as free speech prevails and opinions are informed by facts.