

REPORT

FROM THE

CAPITAL

BJC Magazine

Special edition: The next generation of advocates

EBOO PATEL calls for a new kind of interfaith leadership

AMANDA TYLER on faith freedom and the coronavirus

HOLLY HOLLMAN on faith-based regulations

The next generation of religious liberty advocates

This edition of *Report from the Capital* shares stories of some of our current and future leaders. BJC is committed to equipping the next generation, and you will hear from some of our former interns, BJC Fellows and others about how they are living into a calling to protect faith freedom for all.

SHURDEN LECTURES: Pages 6-9 share Eboo Patel's message and challenges for the next generation of interfaith leaders.

BJC INTERNSHIP PROGRAM: On pages 10-11, former BJC interns talk about how they are using what they learned to make a difference in their communities today.

BJC FELLOWS PROGRAM: Pages 12-13 show some of our BJC Fellows alumni in action as they took their message to Capitol Hill.

DEVELOPING INTERFAITH LEADERSHIP: On page 14, BJC Fellow Britt Luby talks about her work as a campus chaplain engaging with interfaith work and curating new leaders.

Let us know how we can equip you to raise your voice — we're in this together. Visit BJCOnline.org/make-a-difference to join us in our work and see how you can be an advocate for religious liberty.

Gratitude for your faithful support

As the COVID-19 pandemic upends the lives of millions, we, the BJC staff team, have committed ourselves not only to prayer for our nation and the world, but also to gratitude. We are thankful for our calling to protect religious liberty for all. We are grateful that our staff members remain healthy and continue to work diligently from remote locations. We are thankful for our families and faith communities that daily provide profound encouragement and inspiration. And significantly, we are overwhelmingly grateful for each of you, our BJC family and friends.

The negative economic fallout from the coronavirus is also expected to impact nonprofit organizations like BJC. Congress recently passed and President Trump signed into a law a relief package that includes increased charitable giving incentives to encourage continued generosity in these challenging days. We remain profoundly grateful for the BJC family and friends who are faithful in financially supporting our work as they are able. In 2019, individual donors gave the most to the annual fund in BJC history — more than \$460,000. Additionally, 113 new donors — another historic high — were added to the roll of generous BJC supporters.

Encouragingly, the number of those who give to BJC monthly also has increased to historic highs, reaching 151 individuals. These generous monthly donors, who give regularly at amounts that fit

their budgets, offer regular and predictable financial resources for BJC. Their monthly donations — whether by check, online banking or credit card — form the bedrock from which our work for faith freedom for all thrives. Donors may adjust their monthly donation amount at any time. If you would like more information on becoming a monthly donor, contact Danielle Tyler by email at dt Tyler@BJCOnline.org or visit give.BJCOnline.org.

We are grateful for you. We appreciate your partnership, your advocacy and your financial support for the cause of faith freedom for all. Thank you!



REFLECTIONS

A pivotal time

By Amanda Tyler, BJC Executive Director



I glanced at the online announcement from River Road Church, Baptist, in Richmond, Virginia, and was reminded how it mirrored that of myriad houses of worship over the final weeks of March. It stated that congregants would not gather in person for worship that weekend; instead, each could participate by watching the broadcast of the upcoming service online in the safekeeping of his or her own home.

In his sermon on March 22, the Rev. Dr. Daniel Glaze — the church's senior pastor and a BJC board member — voiced thoughts grounded on the familiar words of Psalm 23. In the context of uncertain times, Rev. Glaze proclaimed, "If there is to be any encouragement, any comfort, any hope, it comes from God, our good and constant shepherd. That alone means we do not have to fear." For me, these words were well received and much needed.

Our daily lives are changing at a rapid pace, only eclipsed by the frightening speed with which the coronavirus is spreading in our country and around the world. Faith surfaces for many as the fundamental framework that gives overwhelming comfort and meaning to life.

In significant ways, this is why BJC exists. For 84 years, we have endeavored to secure faith freedom for all, ensuring that every person has the freedom to believe and to act on those beliefs without unnecessary government interference. As lawyers, educators, communicators and advocates, the team I lead here at BJC is continuing the work of protecting and extending religious liberty for all, even into an uncertain future.

As you will read in this issue, 2020 is shaping up to be a pivotal year for our mission — not only because of the COVID-19 pandemic and the challenges posed to faith freedom for all in this new environment. The U.S. Supreme Court has taken up four cases with implications for religious freedom in its 2019-2020 term (read about some on p. 4), and it accepted another landmark case for next term. We have seen action from the executive branch with the release of new guidance on religion

in public schools and new regulations on the ways faith-based organizations relate to government. Those latter regulations could harm the religious freedom of people who rely on government-funded social services (p. 5). The Trump administration expanded its 2017 travel ban to include an additional six countries, and Congress is taking action on legislation to repeal the ban and prevent future religion-based travel restrictions (p. 15).

We also share much hope for the future, as we highlight the next generation of leadership in this edition. We report on the 15th annual Walter B. and Kay W. Shurden Lectures on Religious Liberty and Separation of Church and State and the first-ever BJC Fellows reunion, two significant events we hosted this year prior to the directives for social distancing that came from public health experts. I hope you will be inspired as I am by the passion and energy of these young leaders. At a time of great uncertainty, we can draw hope in our future outlook.

Your involvement has been — and continues to be — crucial to our mission. I hope you will stay connected, whether that be reading new articles, listening to podcast episodes, using our resources to share your passion for this work with your social media networks, or advocating for faith freedom for all.

At this moment, though, nothing is more important to me and the BJC team than the health and safety of our BJC family — you, our religious liberty friends, donors, advocates and board members. Currently, I am happy to say that all members of our staff are healthy and are working remotely, embracing technology and other resources that allow them to continue our important mission. My greatest hopes and prayers are that you, too, are well.

In this turbulent season when it is natural to reflect on what is truly important, I want to thank you again for your partnership with BJC, advocating for faith freedom and financially supporting BJC's work for religious liberty. Please take good care, stay in touch with us, and let us know how we can support you. We are grateful to be in community with you.



BJC General Counsel Holly Hollman speaks to reporters on January 22 outside the U.S. Supreme Court, following the oral arguments in *Espinoza v. Montana Department of Revenue*.

U.S. Supreme Court updates

Supreme Court postpones March arguments due to COVID-19

On March 16, the Supreme Court announced it would postpone oral arguments scheduled for the March session due to the coronavirus.

The announcement noted how rare such a decision is for the Court. Previously, it postponed scheduled arguments for public health in October 1918 in response to the Spanish flu epidemic, and the Court shortened its calendars in August 1793 and August 1798 in response to yellow fever outbreaks.

At press time, the Court had not announced when it would reschedule those weeks of arguments.

—Staff reports

BJC urges Supreme Court to affirm that RFRA permits monetary damage awards

One of the cases scheduled to be heard by the Supreme Court during the March session was *Tanzin v. Tanvir*, a case involving the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA).

Most often, if you win a lawsuit under RFRA, you will get an order requiring the government to change the policy that substantially burdened your religious exercise. But, can you receive a monetary judgment? That is the question in *Tanzin v. Tanvir*.

RFRA prohibits the government from

substantially burdening a person's religious exercise unless that burden is the least restrictive means of pursuing a compelling government interest. RFRA permits a person whose religious liberty rights have been violated to obtain "appropriate relief against government." *Tanzin* invites the Supreme Court to determine whether or not "appropriate relief" can include monetary damages. The 2nd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals held that it does, stating, "RFRA permits a plaintiff to recover money damages against federal officers sued in their individual capacities."

In a friend-of-the-court brief, BJC attorneys agree with the 2nd Circuit's conclusion and urge the Supreme Court to affirm that ruling. RFRA was always intended, the brief argues, to allow for monetary damages under the same principles that are followed elsewhere in federal law protecting important civil rights. There, plaintiffs alleging violations by government officials are entitled to monetary damages, "but only if defendants violated 'clearly established statutory or constitutional rights of which a reasonable person would have known.'" Congress intended for victims of religious liberty violations to have the same remedy available under RFRA, according to the brief.

The brief — joined by BJC, 14 religious liberty scholars and the Christian Legal Society — details the legislative history of the law as it relates to the question of relief.

—Written by Don Byrd

Supreme Court hears government funding case

On Jan. 22, the U.S. Supreme Court heard oral arguments in *Espinoza v. Montana Department of Revenue*, a case involving a state constitutional ban on government funding of religion.

BJC filed a friend-of-the-court brief in the case that said avoiding government funding of religion is a key protection for religious liberty — the law's distinct treatment of religion keeps government from interfering in the beliefs and practices of religious schools.

"States should not have to fund religious schools," BJC General Counsel Holly Hollman told reporters after oral arguments. "Religion is treated in a unique way in constitutional law, both to avoid its establishment by government and to avoid government interference in its free exercise."

BJC's brief was written with Dr. Steven Green, a professor of law at Willamette University and the nation's leading expert on religious liberty and state constitutions.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; the General Synod of the United Church of Christ; and the Rev. Dr. J. Herbert Nelson II, as Stated Clerk of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), joined BJC's brief. Visit BJCOnline.org/Espinoza for additional information on the case and to read the brief.

—Staff reports

Providing notice of rights protects religious freedom

By Holly Hollman, BJC General Counsel

An often overlooked way that presidential administrations make policy is through executive orders and agency regulations. During the Trump administration, there has been a steady stream of executive actions affecting religious liberty — some minor, some substantial and most recently some entirely indefensible.

On January 16, a date known as “Religious Freedom Day” because it marks the anniversary of the passage of the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom, eight federal agencies proposed rules to change the ways government-funded services are provided by non-governmental partners. With the media focused on the opening of impeachment hearings, the administration’s announcement of the proposed rules barely registered in the day’s news. But the new rules deserve attention and close scrutiny.

The far-reaching, complex and severely flawed rules drew critical comments from a broad spectrum of voices that filed comments within the specified (and unreasonably restrictive) 30-day period. BJC filed comments focusing on just a few aspects that we found most troubling. In particular, we criticized the confusion the proposed rules will create in government-funded programs and the harm they will cause to religious liberty, most importantly through the removal of beneficiary notice provisions.

To explain the impact, I need to provide some context. Every day, vulnerable individuals seek and receive government-funded services to address our country’s most difficult problems, such as homelessness, drug addiction, hunger and family violence. Many of the most successful approaches to such problems involve community-based public-private partnerships, including financial partnerships through government grants and contracts. Private community organizations, whether religiously affiliated or not, are often best situated to welcome and serve those in need.

In a religiously diverse country committed to religious freedom for all, including the separation of the institutions of religion and government, how should this public-private cooperation work?

Two essential principles should apply when protecting religious liberty in the context of government-funded social services. First, no one should have to meet a religious test or participate in religious activity to receive government-funded services. Government assistance for a runaway youth, for example, should never be conditioned

on the youth’s participation in Bible study.

Second, religious organizations (often called “religious affiliates” or “faith-based organizations”) can compete for government grants and contracts to provide taxpayer-funded services. Religious providers have long participated in such public-private partnerships, providing services on the same basis as other nongovernmental entities without altering their religious character.

These foundational principles are among those that undergird our nation’s commitment to religious liberty in the context of government services. They are reflected and bolstered in regulations that apply to federal grant programs. Importantly, they have been included in required notice provisions to ensure that recipients understand these principles. Current regulations provide that faith-based organizations providing social services supported by direct federal financial assistance give beneficiaries (and prospective beneficiaries) written notice that no discrimination based on religion is allowed and that no explicitly religious activity will occur in such programs. Any explicitly religious activities that a religious organization may provide through private funding must be separated in time or location from the federally funded services, and beneficiaries do not need to participate in such separate, privately funded religious activities in order to receive federally funded services. It is important for anyone providing or receiving federally funded services to understand these principles.

The current regulations were carefully developed based on the recommendations of a bipartisan council with expertise in social services, religion and religious liberty law. The council incorporated the experience of a variety of interests that had focused on religious organizations and government partnerships for decades.

The newly proposed rule eliminating notice requirements for beneficiaries should be withdrawn. The rule shows a fundamental disregard for vulnerable recipients of government aid who cannot be expected to know the boundaries of religious liberty in this context. It undercuts the integrity of government-funded services and poses risks to the ethical responsibilities of religious service providers.

The clear disclosure of protections for a recipient’s religious liberty in the current notice provision affirms our country’s commitment to freedom and facilitates faith-based partnerships in government-funded social services. Without it, the public-private cooperation that has worked so well in the past will suffer.

Are you ready to be an interfaith leader?

Eboo Patel reminds students that you don't need doctrinal alignment to work together

By Cherilyn Crowe
BJC Communications Director

“What does it look like to be the kind of leader who can encourage cooperation between people from different religious communities?”

Dr. Eboo Patel challenged college students to be leaders in cooperation, noting that working together can save lives.

Patel, the founder and president of Interfaith Youth Core (IFYC), spoke three times on the campus of Southern Methodist University (SMU) in Dallas, Texas, on March 5. His presentations were for the 2020 Walter B. and Kay W. Shurden Lectures on Religious Liberty and Separation of Church and State, co-hosted by BJC and the Baptist House of Studies at the Perkins School of Theology at SMU.

Patel called students to a new kind of social action that builds bridges across religions to make an impact, encouraging them to consider new ways they can make a difference.

He shared that, when he entered college, he thought there were only a few career paths available to him. Being exposed to new possibilities — from professorships to nonprofit leadership — opened his eyes to new ways to change our civil society for the better.

“I think in the future, being an interfaith leader itself is going to be its own kind of career path,” he said.

“I’m looking at people who are writing chapters that I can’t even dream of in the American story,” he told the students.

Patel founded IFYC on the idea that religion should



Photos by Jennifer Crenshaw



“Religious freedom is an abstract idea that leads to a very concrete reality: Lots of different religions flourishing in a single political entity.”

Eboo Patel

be a bridge of cooperation rather than a barrier of division, and the organization works to make interfaith cooperation a normal part of society while creating the next generation of interfaith leaders.

During the lectures, Patel shared the story of a food depository in Chicago that had many volunteers from different faith communities. The volunteers didn't often work together, and the depository wanted to change that. They just didn't know how, so they asked Patel about hiring someone that could help them create new connections across religious communities.

Patel asked students to consider whether they could apply for that job.

“Our civil society is made up of diverse religious communities volunteering, participating, doing disaster relief efforts, and doing food relief efforts,” he noted. “Do you have the knowledge, the skills, the vision, the kind of right touch to be able to organize them?”

He said that kind of leadership is unique and needed now more than ever.

“Religious freedom is an abstract idea that leads to a very concrete reality: Lots of different religions flourishing in a single political entity,” he said.

Patel noted that, until the United States of America came along, many people thought it

was not possible to have a democracy with religious diversity.

The United States “starts the idea that people who believe very different things — how and why we're created, who gets to heaven and how they get to heaven — could live together. And that's where we get the America we have now,” he said.

In his first lecture, given during chapel at the Perkins School of Theology on SMU's campus, Patel explored the uniqueness of the country's founding and how it allows people with diverse views to live, work and serve together.

“So many of the things that we care about in our civil society and government structures were advanced by people of strong religious and spiritual conviction that benefited people outside of their own community,” he said.

Patel quoted Roger Williams, the founder of the First Baptist Church in America, who talked about his vision of a religiously diverse land in the mid-17th century. Patel also pointed out the Flushing Remonstrance of 1657, which rejected a ban on Quaker worship. Both statements were based on religious convictions.

The authors of the Flushing Remonstrance (in present-day Flushing, Queens, New York) said, in essence, that they cannot allow a ban



on any type of worship because of their own religious conviction as Christians. Likewise, Williams' Christian faith was his driving force for allowing others to worship.

"What is the content of this religious conviction?" asked Patel, that allows someone to say, "as a Christian, as a Muslim, as a Jew, as a Buddhist, it's part of my religious conviction — part of my spiritual thirst — to stand for your freedom and your ability to thrive and flourish as your conscience calls you to."

Patel pointed to the parable of the Good Samaritan, one of the most well-known parables told by Jesus. Patel said that, in any mainstream interpretation, it is a religious call to partnership, including with people who have different religious doctrines.

Patel noted that the story begins with someone asking Jesus how to attain eternal life. When Jesus says to love your neighbor as yourself, he explains who a "neighbor" is through the parable.

The parable includes a priest seeing someone injured on the side of the road and passing by him. However, someone from Samaria — a land where the people practice a different religion — takes care of the man. After telling the story, Jesus tells the crowd, "Go and do likewise."

"It's not just a story about being a nice person or a good citizen," said Patel. "It's a story about how you attain eternal life."

Patel said the message goes beyond a call to love others.

"At least sometimes, you partner with, you emulate, you follow the person whose doctrine you disagree with. That person in your midst has value. They ought to have freedom. They ought to thrive and flourish in the way that they view is right — even if you doctrinally disagree," he said. "You might learn something from them. You might have to follow them. You might have to go and do likewise."

Patel pointed out the importance of a religious conviction for a civic architecture that puts religious freedom at the

center, which allows religious diversity to flourish.

Our nation today is not getting any less religiously diverse, and Patel challenged students in his final lecture to think about how they can learn more about their neighbors and from them.

"If you grew up in 21st century North America, you probably have religiously diverse friends. Working together can save lives," he said, noting the difference it can make in serving the homeless or feeding the hungry through organized volunteer work.

Patel encouraged students to consider how they could use their practical experience to lead people from all faith backgrounds into new partnerships.

"As we equip Baptist leaders to serve God's richly diverse and complex world, Patel called and inspired us to learn practical interfaith leadership skills for serving together for the common good," said the Rev. Dr. Jaime Clark-Soles, the director of the Baptist House of Studies at Perkins School of Theology. "With candidness, humor and plenty of joy, he reminded us that working across differences doesn't mean giving up one's faith or convictions. We don't lose anything, but we stand to gain everything, at least everything that matters to God."

During a lunchtime conversation co-hosted by Faith Commons, the Rev. Dr. George Mason, pastor of Wilshire Baptist Church in Dallas, spoke with Patel about IFYC's work and mission. Patel also shared his personal story and his family's experience as practicing Muslims.

Patel noted that he is fortunate because of those who have gone before him and because of his class privilege. But, he pointed out that his kids are exposed to things he is not, sharing a story about his 9-year-old son. Patel's son engaged in a conversation about religion with his Christian and Jewish friends, but he didn't want to talk about his own

2020 Shurden Lectures



Muslim faith because he felt as if he wasn't as American as his friends of other religions.

"This 9-year-old kid has absorbed the toxins of the culture," said Patel. But, he noted that his kids' class privilege — and advantage of living in the United States — will ultimately overcome those issues; any ugliness of anti-Muslim sentiment or Islamophobia won't come to his kids through official channels. "But, a girl who wears a hijab in Belgium whose parents are from Somalia and whose dad works at a factory — that's a lot different," he noted.

He also shared that IFYC works to make sure students not only are exposed to new ideas but they have opportunities for leadership in new ways.

To close out his challenges to students in his third and final lecture, Patel gave another example of cross-religious partnership and learning that led to social action: the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Patel noted that King was a key civil rights leader and an important interfaith leader. But above all, King was a Baptist minister. And, outside of Jesus, a Hindu was the one who most shaped the way King acted in the world: Mahatma Gandhi.

Patel told the story of King's journey to India in the 1950s to see Gandhi's legacy. And, he was stunned to see that the movement there wasn't necessarily just a Hindu movement — it was an interfaith movement built by a Hindu.

When he came back to Montgomery, Alabama, King gave a sermon that said the most Christlike person of the 20th century was a Hindu from India. King then ended the sermon noting the different names people call God from different traditions.

Then, to close, King offered an invitation to the congregation to accept Christ into their lives.

Patel noted the significance of that sermon, pointing out how King showed respect for other religious traditions while being true to who he was as a believing Christian. King's sermon illustrated that one can respect, appreciate, love, learn from and cooperate with people across religions while never downplaying someone's own faith tradition.

"You can have roots and wings," Patel said. "That's part of the beauty of interfaith cooperation, and it is a characteristic trait of so many of the interfaith leaders that I know."



Go online for more!

Visit BJCOnline.org/ShurdenLectures to learn more about the annual event and access additional resources, including photos and videos.

BJC interns: 200+ leaders working across the country

Nearly 40 years ago, BJC Executive Director James Dunn began our internship program. Thanks to the generous support of our donors, more than 200 talented individuals at the start of their careers have spent a semester working with us on Capitol Hill, including BJC Executive Director Amanda Tyler and General Counsel Holly Hollman.

Former interns often tell us about the positive ways BJC impacted them during their time with us — even when they weren't expecting it. Hear from a few of the people who have spent time working with us and what the experience meant to them.

I had my doubts

By Elana Reman Safner

I came to BJC from a very different place and perspective than most interns. Before I even knew BJC's mission, I had lived it. As a child, I came to the U.S. as a religious refugee with my family from Ukraine in the mid-1990s. After the former Soviet Union instituted a policy of secularization, practicing any religion was unwelcome, but openly practicing a minority religion was downright dangerous.

When I stumbled upon the BJC internship, I was a recent graduate of the University of Miami looking for an interesting opportunity in Washington, D.C., before I went to law school. The internship caught my eye because I was interested in First Amendment law and — of course — believed in a strong separation of church and state, which empowers all to freely practice their faith. And, it provided housing and a stipend!

However, I had my doubts. Who are these Baptists that are fighting for religious liberty for other groups? Why would they do that? They're Christian, but they think Christianity shouldn't have a privileged role? Why would anyone advocate against their own interests? Talking with Brent Walker and Holly Hollman convinced me to take a leap of faith, and in the spring of 2013, I joined BJC as its first ever Jewish intern.

I worked closely with Holly, learning about the interpretation of law and advocacy. I researched and helped develop positions on the constitutionality of FEMA disaster relief funding to houses of worship, taxpayer-funded voucher programs for parochial schools, and other topics for *amicus* briefs. I also learned about how Baptist principles shaped the religious philosophy on which this nation was founded.

After my internship, I went on to attend Duke University School of Law and continued to stay in

touch with BJC, contributing financially when I could and attending annual luncheons and other events. I now live in Washington, D.C.,

where I put the other side of my First Amendment expertise to work as a technology, communications and media associate at a large law firm. I attend local BJC events, serve on the intern engagement committee, and of course, continue to contribute financially to help BJC advance its mission — which is more crucial now than ever before. On a personal note, I still consider my co-intern among my closest friends, and I also met my now-husband while interning at BJC! Several BJC staff members even attended our wedding!

I continue to give to BJC because I feel — truly — that BJC has invested far more in me than I have yet had the opportunity to give back.

When you are part of a marginalized or minority group, you are taught to be self-serving and to stick up for your own people, because if you don't, no one else will. Until I came to BJC, I had no idea that such an organization could exist — an organization that understands its own faith-based mission is best served by speaking out for the rights of others. An organization that truly practices what it preaches when it stands up for religious liberty for all.

Elana Reman Safner interned at BJC in the spring of 2013. She now works as an attorney in the D.C. area.





At BJC, I learned from trailblazers like James Dunn about the importance of fighting for religious liberty and the history of the torchbearers who have defended these liberties for centuries. I felt honored to play a small part in advocating for these freedoms for all.

BJC stands on the front lines protecting our freedoms every day. My time at BJC inspired me to pursue a career in public service.

Today, as a policy consultant, I help foundations and nonprofits create policy recommendations and strategic advocacy plans. Through my different roles in public service, I continue to gain a greater appreciation for the vital importance of BJC's work.

Ed Meier, Spring 1996 intern

Former U.S. State Department official and founder of Meier Strategies, a policy consulting firm

The opportunity to work and learn at BJC during my internship gave me a firm foundation in my Baptist identity. Likewise, it set me up well to serve as a pastor of a Baptist congregation. It's important that I use my platform to stand in solidarity around important issues that impact our communities, such as adding my name to letters urging Congress not to politicize our houses of worship or by actively supporting the ongoing BJC campaign of Christians Against Christian Nationalism.

Like many interns past and present, I testify with tremendous gratitude for my time at BJC, and I could not be the minister I am today without it.

Rev. Darrell Hamilton, Spring 2017 intern

Pastor for Formation and Outreach, First Baptist Church, Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts



The BJC internship expanded my vision and helped me put my Baptist convictions to work on the ground in meaningful ways. It was a huge part of my ministerial and personal development, and I am forever grateful for the experience!

Rev. Natalie Webb, Spring 2009 intern

Associate Pastor at First Baptist Church, Worcester, Massachusetts
Co-director of Nevertheless She Preached

Former interns: We want to hear from you!

Tell us what difference the BJC internship made in your life. Email Carlton Gay at cgay@BJCOnline.org to receive your online survey.

If you know someone interested in being a BJC intern, the deadline to apply for the fall semester is June 30.

The program is open to students and graduates, and it includes housing and a stipend.

Visit BJCOnline.org/internships for details.

Support BJC interns with a gift at give.BJCOnline.org.



Young professionals gather and take action on Capitol Hill

In February, more than 20 BJC Fellows — including individuals from each of our five classes — came to Washington to learn, reconnect and advocate for religious freedom.

On the first day, BJC Fellows brainstormed, caught up with old friends and received updates from staff about the latest developments in religious liberty.

On the second day, BJC Fellows headed to Capitol Hill for dozens of meetings with the offices of their members of Congress, advocating for faith freedom for all. They discussed supporting H. Res. 512 and S. Res. 458, which are bipartisan resolutions calling for the repeal of blasphemy and apostasy laws around the world. BJC Fellows also talked about how public schools support religious liberty for all, and they asked members of Congress to support bipartisan resolutions about Public Schools Week and share why public schools are important.

Search the hashtags #BJCFellows and #BJCAdvocacy on Instagram and Twitter for additional photos and posts from many of the BJC Fellows.





#BJCFellows reunion on social media

Rev. Aurelia Davila Pratt  @revaureliajoy

“All lobbying is, is a meeting. And I know you, and you can have a meeting.” Jennifer Hawks, @BJContheHill #GetInvolved #ReligiousFreedom #advocacy #BJCFellows

Christopher The  @thechristhe

Happy to meet with the Legislative Assistant for Sen. @SenBobCasey (D-PA)—to advocate for repeal of blasphemy/apostasy laws & to voice solidarity during #PublicSchoolsWeek



Rev. Libby Grammer  @LibbyGrammer

Enjoyed meeting with my Congressman @RepMGriffith today on Capitol Hill to discuss important issues of religious liberty. He was knowledgeable about Baptist religious history & sees the importance of bipartisan support of #FaithFreedomForAll #BJCAAdvocacy #BJCFellows



BJC Fellows Taylor Bell and Keisha Patrick with Sen. Doug Jones, D-Alabama.



BJC Fellow Jo Springer with Sen. Deb Fischer, R-Nebraska.



Instagram Takeover  @bjconthehill

BJC Fellow Molly Shepard took over BJC's Instagram account as she and others went to Capitol Hill to advocate for #FaithFreedomForAll. Visit our Instagram page to see her highlights from that day.



Follow @BJContheHill on social media and see more stories by searching #BJCAAdvocacy and #BJCFellows

Discovering interfaith leadership

By Britt Luby



“If you believe I am going to hell, the absolute worst place you can imagine, how can we ever be in an authentic relationship together?” she asked, and I curled up tighter into a ball.

I was 19 and attending “Coming Together,” the first national summit of interfaith councils, at Princeton University. There, I also met Eboo Patel and learned about his newly-founded Interfaith Youth Core (IFYC). It was 2005, and while I had friends from diverse faith traditions, I was not yet able to recognize just how much Christian privilege I carried. I used my faith as a way for me to identify who was “in” and who was “out.” If I could meet my 19-year old self, I would say, “Be gentle with yourself, dear one, but please also be much gentler with others. Your world is about to get bigger. Kinder. Better.”

That first connection to interfaith collaboration launched me into years of interfaith work.

In college at Texas Christian University in Fort Worth, Texas, I helped launch our campus’s first Interfaith Council. In graduate school, I spent a month in India studying religion and interfaith dialogue. In 2013, my husband and I joined the Peace Corps and moved to Morocco. I quickly learned that 99% of Moroccans are Muslim (I also quickly learned Moroccan Arabic!).

Prior to Morocco, I thought that the best way for me to engage in interfaith work as a member of a majority religion was to make my faith smaller so that others felt more comfortable. In Morocco, my perspective shifted. I was profoundly moved by the love and kindness my Muslim community shared with me because of their faith. They were 100% Muslim, and yet I always felt welcomed just as I was. I recognized that I could be part of interreligious dialogue *because* of my identity as a Catholic Christian, not in spite of it.

I now serve as a chaplain at TCU, and a major focus of my work is supporting campus-wide interfaith initiatives. My partnerships with IFYC and BJC empower me to do this work better than I could on my own. Each year, I send several students to IFYC’s Interfaith Learning Institute in Chicago. This workshop trains students to be effective interfaith leaders on campus, and these students then serve as interfaith interns for the Office of Religious and Spiritual Life.

This past semester, one intern named Julia connected with a Hindu student over a meal and asked, “What do you need to better practice your faith on campus?” That question turned into the first ever Diwali dinner at TCU. On a Friday evening (a Friday night! on a college campus!), more than

20 Hindu students showed up to eat Indian food and craft a rangoli (a pattern on the floor made of flower petals). Julia and her fellow interns used what they learned from IFYC to create relationships with underrepresented students and work together to meet their needs as people of faith.

As a BJC Fellow, I have the added lens of protecting religious liberty in my work. Every other year, TCU organizes a Tunnel of Oppression, an interactive event that highlights contemporary issues of oppression. It is designed to introduce participants to concepts of oppression, privilege and power. In November, the interfaith interns used resources from BJC to create a room in TCU’s tunnel. They introduced more than 600 students to religious oppression and Christian privilege. I was beaming with pride.

It is a good thing that 19-year-old Britt met other curious, brave and devoutly religious students at that interfaith gathering many moons ago. Those early relationships moved me into a field that I didn’t even know existed.

During this year’s Shurden Lectures, Eboo Patel said that, in the future, being an interfaith leader is going to be a career path. I feel lucky to be on that path already; it is a privilege to shine light on that path for others. Watch out, world: interfaith rock stars are coming your way.

Britt Luby is a 2018 BJC Fellow who serves as Associate Chaplain at TCU in Fort Worth, Texas. Her work focuses on religious literacy and interfaith leadership, grief support for students coping with loss and pastoral care/spiritual development for young adults.



TCU students, including two IFYC-trained interns, attend a Diwali dinner on campus.

Take action: Support the NO BAN Act

Before the coronavirus pandemic, the House of Representatives was scheduled to vote on the NO BAN Act. This bill will: (1) add religion as a protected category in the Immigration and Nationality Act, (2) repeal President Trump's travel ban and (3) add monthly accountability measures on any future executive order or proclamation that restricts immigration.

BJC has been an outspoken critic of the travel ban since it began in 2017 when President Trump banned migration from seven majority-Muslim countries, temporarily shut down refugee resettlement and sought to prioritize Christian refugees.

On January 31, 2020, the president expanded that travel ban, and BJC Executive Director Amanda Tyler called on all Americans to join us against this "immoral violation of our treasured value of religious freedom for all people."

"The specifics of the travel ban have changed over the past three years, but this fact remains: this policy, no matter how much it undergoes chameleon-like aesthetic adjustments, is ultimately rooted in anti-Muslim bias," she wrote. Read more at [Medium.com/@BJContheHill](https://medium.com/@BJContheHill).

In faithful solidarity with our Muslim neighbors, BJC supports the NO BAN Act as one way to fight against the anti-Muslim bigotry the travel ban represents and perpetuates. At press time, the House had not yet rescheduled the vote on this bill.

What can I do?

Contact your members of Congress and ask them to support the NO BAN Act. For the latest on where the bill stands, visit BJCOnline.org/make-a-difference.

What should I say?

Here is a sample script:

"Hello, my name is [NAME] and I am a constituent of Representative/Senator [NAME]. I am calling to ask him/her to vote YES on the NO BAN Act. The travel ban is un-American and betrays our nation's ideal of religious freedom for all. America has no second-class faiths, and our government should not favor one religion over another. Thank you for your time and consideration."

Updates: You made an impact!

Your advocacy does make a difference! Don't underestimate these seemingly small, consistent actions — they are the building blocks of sustainable, significant change.

Public Schools Week

Bipartisan resolutions were introduced in the House and Senate to honor the vital contributions of public schools in our society. Recognizing February 24-28 as Public Schools Week, the Senate passed S. Res. 521 on Thursday, February 27.

Although the House resolution did not reach a vote, both resolutions were introduced with increased bipartisan support and more cosponsors than in previous years. Along with our coalition partners, BJC is encouraged by this increased engagement, awareness and participation as we celebrate this recognition

and look ahead to next year's Public Schools Week.

Global Blasphemy Resolutions

S. Res. 458, the Senate resolution calling for the repeal of global blasphemy and apostasy laws, was introduced in late December by its original cosponsors: Sen. James Lankford, R-Okla., and Sen. Chris Coons, D-Delaware. This bipartisan resolution is continuing to seek additional cosponsors.

The identical House resolution, H. Res. 512, continued to gain bipartisan momentum. In January, BJC submitted written testimony to the House

Committees on Foreign Affairs and Oversight and Reform for a joint hearing that included discussion of H. Res. 512. The resolution was passed out of committee on March 4, and it is expected to be taken up for a vote by the full House sometime this session.

"Apostasy and blasphemy laws harm all of us—religious and non-religious alike," according to BJC's written testimony. "They are used to justify vigilante violence against both religious and nontheistic dissenters. They harm practitioners of the protected religion by squelching dialogue and debate about their faith."

We want to hear from you!

If you participated in Public Schools Week or if you called your members of Congress about blasphemy resolutions or the NO BAN Act, let us know! Contact Christine Browder at cbrowder@BJCOnline.org to share your story or receive resources.

Join the BJC Advocacy Team! Sign up for action alerts at BJCOnline.org/subscribe.



New BJC Podcast series: Respecting Religion

What's at stake for faith freedom for all in a tumultuous 2020? Each week, BJC Executive Director Amanda Tyler and General Counsel Holly Hollman are sitting down to talk about it for a new BJC Podcast series. They discuss the latest news impacting the way the government relates to religion and share how they see religion reflected in the world around us.

This weekly series called "Respecting Religion" began February 20, and new episodes are released each Thursday. Don't miss out on this conversation! They've covered topics including religion and public schools, the impact of the coronavirus on religious communities, the U.S. Supreme Court case of *Espinoza v. Montana Department of Revenue*, the National Prayer Breakfast and more.

Visit BJCOnline.org/respectingreligion for a list of episodes and links to show notes to get more information about items discussed on the podcast.

EXCERPT FROM EPISODE 03: Religion and Public Schools

AMANDA: In the president's statement itself, he said in public schools around the country authorities are stopping students and teachers from praying, sharing their faith, or following their beliefs. You know...

HOLLY: That is not helpful for religious freedom conversations!

AMANDA: That is not helpful!

HOLLY: Releasing guidelines that show the rules, that educate people about how to get it right — that is very helpful. Demonstrating the diversity of religion in public schools and the good people from a variety of religious perspectives that are involved in the schools — whether they are teachers, administrators, students — is helpful for understanding how we can support public schools and demonstrate religious freedom in the public schools. But, it's extremely unhelpful to exaggerate problems and claim persecution by misrepresenting facts or making them into bigger stories than they should be.



Subscribe to the BJC Podcast on your favorite platform, including:





A conversation with 2020 luncheon speaker Robert P. Jones

Join religious liberty supporters on June 26 for our annual luncheon, which will be a virtual event. This year's speaker is Robert P. Jones, the CEO and Founder of PRRI and a leading scholar and commentator on religion, culture and politics. He is the author of the forthcoming book *White Too Long: The Legacy of White Supremacy in American Christianity*, and *The End of White Christian America*, which won the 2019 Grawemeyer Award in Religion.

BJC Luncheon

Friday, June 26

While we are unable to host an in-person gathering this year because of the COVID-19 pandemic, we will announce alternative plans for a virtual gathering soon.

Visit BJCOnline.org/luncheon for details and the latest information.

What led you to write your forthcoming book, *White Too Long: The Legacy of White Supremacy in American Christianity*?

Every book is in its own way personal and comes from some insight that seems worth understanding and pursuing. This one came from my own need to fully understand how relationships between white and black Americans have impacted the way Christianity — especially the southern branch my family was a part of — developed and what that means for us today. This was a tough book to write, but one that I felt driven to complete as a way of coming to terms with my own faith and its place in these once again racially charged times.

When it comes to American thought regarding politics and religion, which recent trends have particularly caught your attention?

The past decade has witnessed an unprecedented transformation of the religious landscape. In 2008, the U.S. was a majority (54%) white and Christian country. By 2014, that proportion had dropped below majority to 47%. And PRRI's latest numbers show that the country today is only 42% white and Christian — representing a drop of more than a percentage point per year over the past ten years. At the same time, the proportion of religiously unaffiliated Americans has risen to 26%; and for young people under the age of thirty, that number is 40%.

Do you see Christian nationalism overlapping with white nationalism?

Since President Trump's election in 2016, there has been a lot of ink spilled on the subject of nationalism. Although it's not always made explicit, the historical record is clear that nationalism in the U.S. has always been wrapped up with race and religion — specifically the idea of a white Protestant nation. The ideas of the superiority of whites and the superiority of Protestants are deeply embedded in American identity. We've never adequately dealt with that fact, but the demographic changes in the country and a president who is trading explicitly in these ideas have brought us to a new moment of reckoning.

How can we begin to respond to the legacy of white supremacy in American Christianity?

I intentionally refrained from making big pronouncements at the end of the book. The legacy of white supremacy is so ingrained in our churches, theologies and practices that there are no easy "10 step"-type programs that can just be rolled out. The first step is to face the problem squarely. As James Baldwin noted, "Not everything that is faced can be changed. But nothing can be changed until it is faced." I'm hopeful that the book will help us white Christians — who are accustomed to seeing ourselves as well-intentioned people who do good things — to understand that we have to relinquish the myths that still hold us captive if we hope to find a history that can set us free.

Read more from Dr. Jones at BJCOnline.org/luncheon, and join us on June 26.

Honorary and memorial gifts to BJC

In honor of Taylor Bell
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In honor of BJC Staff
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In memory of John Baker
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These gifts were made in 2019. You can honor someone at any time with a gift to BJC. Send a note with your check or make a gift at give.BJConline.org. Contact Danielle Tyler at dtyler@BJConline.org with questions.

Hamil joins BJC to lead development efforts

Dan Hamil, BJC's director of strategic partnerships, is the newest member of BJC's staff. He leads the organization's efforts in the development of financial, denominational and advocacy partnerships. Hamil speaks at churches and organizational events, creates networks of supporters, meets personally with donors and seeks funding from foundations and other charitable organizations.



A longtime BJC supporter and former BJC board chair, Hamil is passionate about BJC's mission. "For nearly three decades, I have watched with deepest respect the unwavering work that BJC has done to protect religious liberty for all," Hamil said. "What a privilege it is for me to join this amazing team of people and to dream with them about new ways to extend faith freedom for this generation and for generations to come."

Hamil comes to BJC after leading one of the organization's member bodies: the North American Baptist Conference (NABC) of churches. Prior to his role as CEO and Executive Director of NABC, Hamil served the organization as Vice President of Advancement, which included directing and implementing all fundraising and communication initiatives for NABC.

"I'm thrilled that Dan has joined the BJC staff team to lead our development efforts," said Amanda Tyler, BJC's executive director. "Dan brings not only years of development and organizational leadership, but also an energetic commitment to BJC's mission and a pastoral approach. He has an innovative track record of elevating younger leaders and is excited to get to know the multi-generational family of BJC supporters."

Hamil also served as Vice President for Professional Learning at a national educational publishing firm, where he was active in training and school relationships with universities, colleges, school districts, high schools and grant-aided educational programs.

Ordained in the NABC, Hamil has extensive ministry experience, having served in various pastoral roles in Ohio, Illinois and North Dakota.

Hamil earned a Doctor of Education in Adult and Continuing Education, and he holds a bachelor's degree in Biblical Theology and master's degrees in Educational Ministries as well as Christian History and Theology.

Hamil and his wife, Rhonda, live in Rocklin, California, and have two married children. They are members of Oak Hills Church in Folsom, California.

Kearns-McCoy joins BJC as communications manager

Chris Kearns-McCoy, from northern New Jersey, is BJC's communications manager. He works to expand and deepen support for religious freedom for all people through digital media and press relations.



Kearns-McCoy is a graduate of Tufts University, where he majored in International Relations. Throughout college, he worked with several refugee and immigrant service and legal aid organizations.

Prior to joining BJC, Kearns-McCoy worked in communications at the Friends Committee on National Legislation, the Quaker lobby for peace and justice. He attends Friends Meeting of Washington, the Quaker congregation in Washington, D.C.

BJC welcomes interns

Get to know our spring semester interns working with our staff.



HALLE HERBERT, from Eldon, Missouri, is a graduate of Missouri State University, earning a Bachelor of Science degree in Political Science. During her undergraduate studies, Herbert was chosen to be Missouri's representative to the Henry Clay Center for Statesmanship Student Congress. In the Congress of 50 individuals, Herbert elevated Missouri's core principles at a national level. The daughter of Mike and Michele Herbert, she plans to pursue a career working in Missouri politics.

KARLEE MARSHALL, from Norman, Oklahoma, is a graduate of the University of Oklahoma, earning a degree in Communication with a minor in Nonprofit Organizational Studies. She previously interned for CBF Oklahoma and Oklahoma Policy Institute, and she served as a former associate director of C.L.U.E. Camp at Metro Baptist Church in New York City. Marshall is the daughter of Linn and Victoria Marshall. After the internship, she plans to attend law school in the state of Oklahoma.



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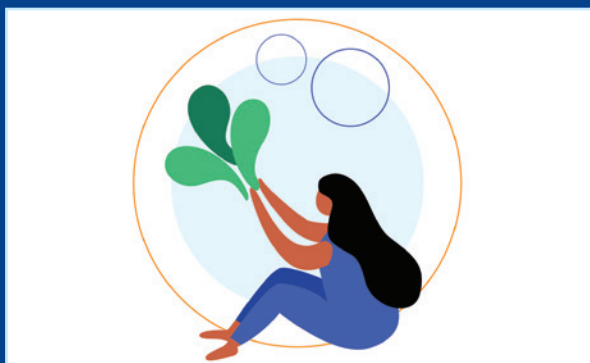
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Amanda Tyler EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
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Thank you for making 2019 a record-setting year for financial support of faith freedom for all. Learn more about ways to partner with BJC on page 2.



BJC Podcast

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