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Kieryn:

I'm Kieryn.

Eve:

I'm Hannah. This is Kitchen Table Cult.

Kieryn:

Where two Quiverfull escapees talk about our experiences in the cultish underbelly of the Religious Right.

Eve:

Hi, Kieryn.

Kieryn:

Hey, Hannah.

Eve:

How's it going?

Kieryn:

Good. I did a lot of talking this week to a bunch of people. How was your week?

Eve:

I did a lot of talking this week to a bunch of people too. Who were you talking to?

Kieryn:

I was talking to people for ADHD for school and I was talking to some people about making a documentary. I had some other meetings. Now I don't remember what they were.

Eve:

I had a interview for a secret project about how parental rights is tied to the religious freedom task force and conversion therapy. Super fun.

Kieryn:

That's a fun topic, not exactly what we talked about last week.

Eve:

Totally not at all what we talked about last week.

Kieryn:

No. What do we get to talk about this week?

Eve:

My puppy, obviously.

Kieryn:

Yes. I need to meet your puppy.

Eve:

I know. I really need to figure out a way to keep this puppy. It's a foster, but I'm falling in love really hard. I'm calling her Blanche after the Golden Girls.

Kieryn:

It's beautiful.

Eve:

Yeah, which is a show I didn't grow up watching, but I have become familiar with this last year and loving.

Kieryn:

I still haven't watched it yet. It's on my list.

Eve:

You get four single randy old ladies in a house together. That's basically the plot. It's really good. To our listeners who are familiar with it, I think I'm Sophia. What are we talking about this week?

Kieryn:

I think we should actually talk about HSLDA.

Eve:

What does HSLDA stand for, to your listeners?

Kieryn:

The Homeschool Legal Defense Association is this organization we've been referring to for the entirety of this podcast so far and the work they've done with homeschooling and a bunch of other things. Finally, we're just going to talk about them.

Eve:

In all those Antifa Twitter conversations about, "When were you radicalized?" HSLDA is when I was radicalized.

Kieryn:

Yeah. Were your parents members of HSLDA?

Eve:

We were card-carrying members from day one. We had some friends in the Bay area who had been homeschooling longer than we had. They gave us all the tips and directed us to HSLDA right away. I remember the little card that they would give you in court report about the steps to take if a social worker appeared at your door. We had that cut out and taped to the back of our front door. That's when we installed a peephole in the door was when we started homeschooling, for that exact reason.

Kieryn:

I remember we also had that on the fridge or something, somewhere we could see. It was like, "Don't open the door for a social worker. Always call us first, because they'll just come get you."

Eve:

We were so scared of social workers. We were trained to have all these responses if we were out in public, about homeschooling and like, "We definitely like homeschooling," and, "No, our parents never beat us," and, "Yes, we're totally educated thoroughly."

Kieryn:

Socialized.

Eve:

Socialized and, "We hang out with friends. Our siblings are our friends too, and that counts."

Kieryn:

That was actually why my mom told me I didn't need friends.

Eve:

You didn't need friends?

Kieryn:

Because I had my siblings.

Eve:

I wasn't allowed to have best friends because that would privilege people over my siblings.

Kieryn:

I'm making this face now that you can't see.

Eve:

It's a very sour face.

Kieryn:

It's a face.

Eve:

I take great pride in calling lots of people my best friend now because of having been forbidden from it for so long.

Kieryn:

That makes sense. I never really had a best friend, just because I loved everybody equally but differently. I was poly before I knew how that worked.

Eve:

You were polyamorous-

Kieryn:

With friends.

Eve:

... before polyamorous was cool. Yeah, same.

Kieryn:

Everybody is my best friend.

Eve:

Same.

Kieryn:

I love them all equally.

Eve:

This is different. Each connection is unique. I make a joke about my undergrad college, and I say that Reagan is the fourth member of the trinity there, but I think Mike Farris is the fourth member of the trinity homeschooling.

Kieryn:

Yes. He's the go-to authority on the subject and the one everyone reveres, because to most people, he's the reason homeschooling is legal. At least that's the narrative that winds up getting pushed or implied.

Eve:

Who is he? What's his affiliation with HSLDA?

Kieryn:

He started it.

Eve:

He started with J. Michael Smith.

Kieryn:

What do we know about him?

Eve:

They're both lawyers from the West Coast who got interested in homeschooling in I guess 1981. They both decided that that was a good idea. I forget the exact history, but I know Jonathan Lindvall was a homeschool activist in California, also a lawyer, who had discovered that you could homeschool legally under the private school clause, because private schools weren't defined well enough there.

Kieryn:

He's why we have that.

Eve:

Yeah. He didn't do anything about it. He just discovered the loophole.

Kieryn:

He just pointed it out.

Eve:

He pointed out the loophole and started using it for his own kids. He's the guy, the betrothal of Maranatha, you've heard that story, where the 15-year-old girl or 13-year-old girl was betrothed to this guy and waits forever for him to show up to the wedding. That was Jonathan Lindvall. I remember hearing him speak at a homeschool camp we went to at Hartland Christian Camp in Kings Canyon National Park. These guys, they go way back in West Coast homeschooling. They founded HSLDA in 1983 and came to the East Coast, because that's where all of the action is. Mike Farris was involved with Concerned Women For America, which is really cute, because that's a group founded by Tim and Beverly LaHaye of the Left Behind series fame. I think this was where he got his start with activism and learning how to lobby. That group was lobbying against the ERA. Concerned Women For America is referring to they are concerned that feminism was going to ruin America for women.

Kieryn:

It wasn't a leftist thing where it's like, "We're concerned about gun violence." It's, "These women have almost equal rights and this is dangerous for society."

Eve:

"Women are happy. Why would we want to make them discontent and tell them a lie about how the world is actually out to get them?" If you want more along that vein, you should read Mary Pride's The Way Home. It's terrifying.

Kieryn:

I somehow managed to avoid Mary Pride, and I'm real glad.

Eve:

Do you know her daughter went to PHC?

Kieryn:

No, but that doesn't surprise me.

Eve:

Probably the same time that your ex was there actually.

Kieryn:

That makes sense.

Eve:

PHC is Patrick Henry College, which is God's Harvard. It's a little college in northern Virginia that's not properly accredited. If you go there, you will not be able to transfer to any other school, and they do not have sufficient language requirements for you to actually graduate easily. They are a little academic army brainwashing institution for people who want to be involved in D.C. politics from the super conservative right side. They are located in the same building as HSLDA's office. They're founded by all the same people. Mike Farris was the chancellor, right?

Kieryn:

Yeah, I think so.

Eve:

I think they only have room for between 500 and 700 students. It's very, very small.

Kieryn:

They cater to homeschoolers explicitly.

Eve:

Both of these institutions thrive off of the idea that the world is out to get homeschoolers. They create this fear of America hates homeschoolers, homeschooling is under attack. They have the monthly magazine court report that they put out that just helps you-

Kieryn:

Hammers home how persecuted you are for homeschooling.

Eve:

It's set to terrify homeschool parents into reupping their subscription to HSLDA so that they have, quote unquote, "legal protection" for when they need it, because of course you're going to need it, which is bullshit.

Kieryn:

Social workers are on every street corner and behind every shadow, just waiting to snatch your kids because they hate the concept of homeschooling so much.

Eve:

They're like the child catcher in Chitty Chitty Bang Bang. That's how social workers are portrayed. PHC is designed around the idea that homeschoolers are discriminated against by college admissions processes, and so you have to go to their elite little school that will take you. You don't have to. You could also go to Regent or Liberty.

Kieryn:

Right, but PHC is the best one, because it's the most exclusive and the most conservative. My parents thought Liberty and Regent were too liberal. They also thought-

Eve:

The panic.

Kieryn:

... Patrick Henry was too liberal for women, because women aren't supposed to go to college.

Eve:

I remember hearing students who'd started there, because it was started in 2000, I remember hearing students who'd been in the first or second class there griping about how the admissions standards had dropped by the time 2009 had rolled around, and they were letting in all these subpar homeschoolers. The elite isn't as strong with this one.

Kieryn:

It really is. Everyone likes to talk about how the liberals are so elite and terrible, but homeschoolers really, it's a persecution complex mixed with elitism that is the thing that we deal with.

Eve:

The persecution complex is what pays the bills for these people. They also started a couple PACs. They've started Generation Joshua. They've started HSLDA PAC, and they've started [parentalrights.org](#). You want to get into what each of those are?

Kieryn:

[Parentalrights.org](#) is Mike Farris's pet project about making parental rights a constitutional amendment.

Eve:

A national constitutional amendment, right?

Kieryn:

Yeah, it is an international movement, because they're also taking it over to other countries too. Russia I think, right, is where they've also come with it.

Eve:

We can get into that more with our guest later I'm sure.

Kieryn:

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Basically they want to codify that parents have ultimate control over their children's life, education, access to things in the U.S. Constitution, in state constitutions, and internationally.

Eve:

Then the HSLDA PAC, because HSLDA is a 501c3 they can't do lobbying, so they created a PAC that will do their own lobbying for them on the same issues.

Kieryn:

Right, which is pretty self-explanatory I feel.

Eve:

We talked about Generation Joshua last time. What are HSLDA's primary priorities? What is this fear-mongering that they're using?

Kieryn:

I'm just going to go to their website, because-

Eve:

Get a statement of assumptions and goals.

Kieryn:

They didn't take it down. Their website is new. It's updated.

Eve:

HSLDA's?

Kieryn:

Yeah.

Eve:

Wow.

Kieryn:

It's halfway through a redesign right now, so the navigation is different, but the pages are the same. It's weird.

Eve:

Are they using child labor to do that?

Kieryn:

Probably.

Eve:



Did you know that-

Kieryn:

New mission.

Eve:

... they were lobbying for 14 and 15-year-olds to be able to work, because homeschool kids were mature enough and it would benefit their education if they were employed?

Kieryn:

Also, how else are they going to staff their student projects and run all of those campaigns if not homeschool child labor?

Eve:

I know. It's really, really cute. If they say anything about how they're for children's rights, let's just start there. That's how children's rights started was child labor.

Kieryn:

Their mission statement is, "To preserve and advance the fundamental, God-given, constitutional right of parents and others legally responsible for their children to direct their education. In so doing we rely on two fundamental freedoms, parental rights and religious freedom. We advocate for these freedoms in the courtrooms before government officials and in the public arena. Additionally, we assist other educational organizations in similar activities where possible and appropriate."

Eve:

Gotcha.

Kieryn:

It's not actually a constitutional right, nor is it God-given, but these are minor details.

Eve:

That's Old Testament, Old Covenant stuff. That was erased in the New Covenant. The theological conflation here is just a lot. They assume that people won't know enough about the Bible to argue that.

Kieryn:

Exactly. That's what they're counting on, or people who do know enough about it also are of the same vein and don't care that they're extrapolating.

Eve:

Also, fun fact, didn't Mike Farris write a novel?

Kieryn:

Didn't he write several?

Eve:

I think he wrote several, but the first one, Anonymous Tip, I think is really good, because it sounds like a bondage erotica book, but it's not. It's about a sex worker. Not a sex worker, a social worker. A social worker-

Kieryn:

I'm like, "Wow."

Eve:

... faking bruises on a child to get them removed from a conservative Christian and then later homeschool family's house. Apparently the parent removes the child from the school system because of the persecution of the social worker, in order to protect them, which is funny, because that ties in to the Connecticut office of the child advocate study that we've been using a lot at CRHE.

Kieryn:

Yes, it does, actually.

Eve:

You want to catch people up on that one?

Kieryn:

Yeah. In Connecticut a study was done that was looking into when CPS was called on children, how many of those were repeats. They have different qualifications for that.

Eve:

They used the terms founded, like founded a case.

Kieryn:

The people who were pulled out of school after having so many calls or after having calls. I looked at the numbers, and it was significant that-

Eve:

It's 31%.

Kieryn:

... the amount of people who had CPS called on them and withdrew them from school. I'm saying this wrong because I don't have it in my brain right now because I [crosstalk 00:17:11].

Eve:

I have the data because I used it. It's okay.

Kieryn:

It was this thing where 36% of the cases in Connecticut were called multiple times, and the people who removed them from school after being called on were the ones with a significant amount. It's something that proves the relation of people trying to remove their children from the school after abuse is noticed, which is something that we've been seeing for a while. It just proves that there's actually something there.

Eve:

People are using homeschooling to cover for abuse. I think it was 31% of these cases were founded cases, legitimate cases of either multiple reports or backed up, evidence-based report of child abuse. That was the number of kids pulled and then enrolled in homeschooling as a way of covering up the tracks.

Kieryn:

Which is a not insignificant amount. It's one of those things that's like, there is actually something to see here.

Eve:

That's a statistically significant number.

Kieryn:

Which is unfortunate.

Eve:

Let's take a break here. Our guest, Kathryn Brightbill, is going to join us and we can talk a little bit more about the impact the HSLDA has had in our country.

Kieryn:

We're back.

Eve:

Hey, Kathryn.

Kieryn:

Hey.

Kathryn:

Hey, Kieryn.

Kieryn:

We have our friend Kathryn.

Eve:

You want to-

Kieryn:

You want to introduce yourself?

Eve:

... catch everybody up on who you are and why we know you and why we wanted you on today?

Kathryn:

I am the legislative policy analyst and board member at CRHE. I've done a lot of research on the history of HSLDA and all of their shenanigans that they've been up to over the years, because my parents have been members of it since 1986, so since I was bored, I read most of the court reports over the years.

Eve:

It's good bathroom reading. Helps with constipation for sure. Get you scared enough so that your bowels release. Your parents are pretty deep into all of this stuff. Where do you come from? What's your family background like?

Kathryn:

My dad actually used to be a teacher. About the time that I was going to be starting kindergarten, my dad left the Christian school that he was teaching at, and where my older brother was enrolled. They decided they weren't going to enroll us back there, probably because the education there wasn't really that great. My brother had already had a string of teachers who didn't know what they were talking about, about a bunch of facts. Around that time, my parents heard about homeschooling, because our neighbors down the street were homeschooling, and so they decided to do that instead of putting us in Christian school or public school after my dad quit teaching. Fairly quickly, they ended up running the umbrella school we were part of. The umbrella school thing, I guess I probably just should back up. Before the Florida Homeschool Law was passed in '85, the way that homeschooling was legal was by incorporating as a private school under the private school statute. My parents joined one of those private umbrella schools.

Eve:

Which is how it is in California, basically.

Kathryn:

Similar, although there had been some case law that individual families couldn't be private schools in Florida, so they would join together and actually do some of the actually recordkeeping that they were supposed to do as private schools. My parents ended up running the thing fairly quickly after that, since they knew what they were doing and knew how schools were supposed to be run, since my dad has his master's in education. They were very much on the ball, made sure that they were in compliance with everything, basically follow the Florida public school laws as far as what students were required to take. They were actually involved then in founding the Florida Coalition of Christian Private School Administrators, which is now the Florida Coalition of Christian Private School Accreditation, that exists to help the homeschool umbrella schools be on the ball and do what they're supposed to. They were involved in founding that back in the mid-'90s actually. A bunch of people met up after Mike Farris came to Orlando to speak, weirdly enough.

Eve:

You guys were card-carrying HSLDA members and you met Mike Farris there. You ended up working with him in various ways, or what's your relationship with him?

Kathryn:

I actually never did. I met him that one time. I had applied to be an HSLDA intern and ended up not getting the intern position, which was very disappointing at the time, but turns out it was probably a good move. My parents and my older brother are pretty much why Liberty is now deemed so super homeschool-friendly, because my brother was the first student admitted without taking a GED.

Eve:

Wow.

Kathryn:

My parents were like, "No way is he doing this. He's a National Merit Scholar. You've already offered him a full ride." They ended up meeting with the president of the school and teaching the school how to evaluate homeschool transcripts to determine whether they-

Kieryn:

That's amazing.

Eve:

That's hilarious. With your role with CRHE you've done a lot of research into the history of HSLDA and the effects that they've had and how they work. What have you noticed? What should our listeners know that we haven't covered already?

Kathryn:

One thing that I think is really important is that HSLDA is really, really good at playing a political long game. Mike Farris is not really that great of a lawyer, but he's a very, very good strategist. They've been playing this 30-year political long game, setting things up that they, seeing what was coming down the pike and what direction the country was heading and putting laws in position that they could use later down the road, which they did with Mike Farris authored the Religious Freedom Restoration Act. Basically everything the HSLDA wrote about it was describing a future that we'd have now where the country became more liberal and they needed a law in place to claim religious freedom on discrimination, claim religious freedom for homeschooling. This is something that happened back in 1994.

Eve:

Wow.

Kathryn:

Let me double check the dates. It's been over 20 years. Farris was thinking ahead when he authored it. Nobody else who was involved with RFRA even thought that it would be possible to use it the ways that

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HSLDA has been using it or talking about using it and where, like on LGBT discrimination and things like that. It was 1998 was when RFRA happened.

Eve:

How do you see the Religious Freedom Summit and the Religious Task Force playing out in terms of Farris has been strategic in playing the long game, what is that moment two weeks ago serve in terms of his long plan?

Kathryn:

That's pretty much what he's been playing for all this time was to create a situation where conservative Christians' view of religious freedom is being basically allowed to do whatever they want to, that that was his goal is to create a government agency that would let that happen and that it would give them the rights to do whatever they wanted on it.

Eve:

Only Christians.

Kathryn:

Yeah. It's only conservative Christians, of course.

Kieryn:

Obviously.

Eve:

Not liberal, gay Christians, because that's not respecting the Bible at all.

Kathryn:

Right. Farris has been in thick with Mike Pence for a long time. Farris is pretty much who got Mike Pence the idea of doing the Indiana RFRA that everybody was up in arms about a few years ago.

Eve:

You want to get into that a little bit more? How far do they go back? How did that all go down?

Kathryn:

I just checked my timeline. The RFRA was actually 1993, not 1998 like I was ... In Indiana, Mike Pence signed into law the Religious Freedom Restoration Act version on the state level that basically voted to law the rights to discriminate against LGBT people as a religious freedom right, which caused a massive amount of backlash and uproar, and they ended up modifying that law.

Eve:

Is that what caused the HIV outbreak there and the lack of treatment for that?

Kathryn:

What what that?

Eve:

In Indiana, the HIV outbreak that happened under Pence's watch, was that related to the Indiana RFRA?

Kathryn:

It wasn't directly related to that, but it plays into how Pence basically sees LGBT people as disposable. Mike Farris has basically argued that not subjecting LGBT kids to conversion therapy is child abuse. His extent of his belief in parental rights does not go so far as opposing Russia's law that would have stripped child custody of LGBT parents.

Eve:

This is a good preview, because this is where I see the tie between parental rights and conversion therapy happening, through the Religious Task Force. Talk about how Russia's a preview and what happened there. What has HSLDA's involvement been in that?

Kathryn:

I haven't been able to track HSLDA's direct involvement in any of the LGBT stuff in Russia, although the man, Pavel Parfentiev I believe his ... I'm not sure if I'm pronouncing that correctly. He is the HSLDA's man in Russia, also is the man in Russia for a lot of other Religious Right orgs, including ... I'm drawing a blank on what. I believe he's worked with Concerned Women For America in Russia and a few other groups. There's a whole lot of overlap, even if they aren't working directly.

Kieryn:

I remember that in the early 2000s there was a shift where HSLDA was initially like ... In the early '90s they were like, "Oh, Russia's terrible and Communist," and that was the general consensus.

Eve:

It was post Cold War stuff.

Kieryn:

Then the 2000s at some point, HSLDA was just really chill with Russia. Then they started going over to Russia and having conventions and stuff.

Eve:

How did that happen?

Kieryn:

What was that about?

Kathryn:

I love that story, because they kept that super, super secret from all of their members, because it was supposed to be the World Conference on Families Convention at the Kremlin, but then Russia invaded Crimea, and officially everybody pulled out, but about three quarters of them all went anyway, where it then became officially under the auspices of the Kremlin. I happened to come across one of the HSLDA attorneys Facebook pages where he had a bunch of public posts about it and found some videos of him

and a bunch of other Religious Right leaders meeting with one of the Russian Orthodox archpriests who floated the idea of genocide against LGBT people while they all were sitting there nodding along.

Eve:

Wow.

Kathryn:

HSLDA has never officially admitted that they were at that conference and have kept it super on the down low.

Kieryn:

There's evidence.

Kathryn:

There's evidence and there's videos. There's videos of them speaking at the conference. There's Facebook posts.

Eve:

He was there in his official capacity? He would introduce himself as like, "I am a HSLDA lawyer."

Kathryn:

Yeah. They were there officially as an HSLDA lawyer.

Eve:

Wow.

Kathryn:

His Facebook posts like, "Oh, Russia used to be the evil empire, but now look at this, it's so great. They're welcoming us over here."

Kieryn:

I remember that part.

Kathryn:

This was right after Russia invaded Crimea, when the whole world was still outraged over this. The only chain was originally Farris was supposed to go, and then I've got to look up, I forget which attorney it was that did go. Basically they sent one of their lower-level attorneys instead of Farris.

Eve:

HSLDA has had a lot of activity involving the UN. What do you know about that?

Kathryn:

They pretty much singlehandedly killed ratification of the Convention of the Rights of the Child.



Eve:

I remember that.

Kieryn:

How did that happen? Because usually when they organize nationally, they just flood legislators' phone lines and emails. How did they do that with the UN?

Kathryn:

What they did with that was they basically flooded all the legislators' phone lines so that they didn't vote for ratification of the treaty. Farris has been complaining for years that treaties are on the same level as the Constitution. He doesn't like that.

Eve:

Was that true?

Kathryn:

Back at one point, HSLDA actually tried to get a constitutional amendment passed to lower the standard so that treaties were no longer on the same level as the Constitution. That's how much HSLDA hates treaties.

Kieryn:

Oh my god.

Eve:

Is that even true? As far as I know, treaties don't have the same kind of power as the Constitution over national law.

Kathryn:

They actually do. Usually in practice the courts tend to interpret treaties in a way that doesn't really change our laws, although there have been a few cases with some environmental stuff where we signed treaties with Canada in order to get some environmental protections passed that couldn't pass otherwise.

Eve:

It goes back to how they read the Bible in a super literal sense and they're there interpreting these treaties on a much more serious level than everybody else would.

Kathryn:

Right. That reminds me, when I heard Farris speak at the FPEA Convention, the Florida Parent Educators Convention in 2014, he actually in his talk about how to read the Constitution, he told everyone to read the Constitution like you read the Bible.

Eve:

That's been what I've been saying for years.

Kieryn:

That explains so much about how he teaches it.

Eve:

Kieryn, you took the Con Law class. You took his constitutional law class, right?

Kieryn:

Yeah. I didn't take it all the way through. They had some weird sort of high school version that I took. It wasn't the same as his college class. I took the high school version or whatever, that was basically a workbook. He has a very specific idea of how the Constitution is meant to be interpreted, and it is very much literally like the Bible.

Kathryn:

What he claims about how the Constitution's taught in law school is not at all how constitutional law is actually taught in law school.

Kieryn:

No. The thing that always got me, because I was a huge Con Law nerd when I was a teenager, was I reading the Constitution hand in hand with the Federalist and the Anti-Federalist Papers and Harris's book.

Eve:

You mean you were reading it just like all the rest of us were.

Kieryn:

What Farris was saying did not line up to anything else that I was reading. I'm like, "A lot of this is bullshit."

Eve:

Even then, even then you could tell.

Kieryn:

Yeah. I was just like, "This doesn't match." It was one of those things where I didn't feel comfortable asserting that publicly, but I was like, "This isn't how this works. He's not interpreting this right. This isn't how that is actually meant to be."

Eve:

I had a similar thought when I was George Grant's history humanities class with a bunch of homeschoolers and I was reading Federalist Papers for that. I remember having a similar thought and not knowing how to articulate it, because I assumed that maybe I was missing something because of the archaic language or some context or something. I remember having a similar thought and also feeling tripped up on it.

Kathryn:

Which is why of course they don't want anybody to actually read the primary source documents. I remember in high school reading de Tocqueville and seeing him argue that the actual strength of America was separation of church and state and realizing, "Oh hey, it's the exact opposite that they all taught."

Kieryn:

Things like that always got me too, because I'm like, "I'm looking at this document right here, and what you're saying is not the same thing." They didn't really encourage looking at the original documents, which makes sense.

Eve:

One of the pieces that I want to know a little bit more about, but I think happened after I bailed on following what HSLDA was up to, because I was trying to figure out my life and getting divorced and stuff, the UN Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities also didn't get ratified, because of HSLDA. They were haranguing Bob Dole. What do you know about that? Are you familiar with that story?

Kathryn:

Farris testified before a congressional committee and claimed that ratifying it would mean that the government had control over children who needed eyeglasses. He takes the slippery slope and he turns the slippery slope into-

Kieryn:

Just took a sled.

Kathryn:

... a giant drop off a cliff. Everything is always the worst possible, most literal interpretation of everything.

Eve:

Is it because he was concerned that homeschool parents would be obligated to provide disabled children with extra assistance and tools and stuff or what?

Kathryn:

His conclusion was that having disabled children having rights meant that the government could step in and tell parents what to do about homeschooling.

Eve:

This ties into their fear of parental rights in general.

Kathryn:

Right.

Eve:

Gotcha.

Kieryn:

If children of any kind have any rights at all, then that is obviously an immediate danger to the sanctity of the ultimate authority of parents.

Eve:

That's why I said parental rights and I-

Kieryn:

We couldn't possibly have resources for disabled children.

Eve:

I said parental rights and I meant children's rights. They're super, super scared of children having rights.

Kathryn:

Never mind the fact that the Convention on Disabilities is basically just a copy of the Americans with Disabilities Act. We still couldn't have it, because it would be on the same level as the Constitution as a treaty.

Eve:

They're not scared of the ADA?

Kathryn:

They haven't seemed to have complained about it.

Eve:

It is fairly useless.

Kathryn:

Who knows whether they would really want to get rid of the ADA if they could, but I haven't seen them complain about the ADA.

Eve:

All of my friends with disabilities have talked about the ADA feeling toothless and not really helping them. I guess that probably goes into why HSLDA hasn't given it any intention.

Kieryn:

I think if it had teeth they would probably come against it, but everything I've heard about the ADA is just also like it's the bare minimum.

Eve:

You've had some experiences with that at school trying to get accommodations, right?

Kieryn:

Yeah. It's a lot of work.

Kathryn:

I had to constantly fight with ADA in undergrad because of my allergies. They would be like, "Oh, you still have to clean bathrooms, because everyone has to clean bathrooms." I'm like, "No, that is not how the ADA works." The idea of even making minor accommodations in conservative circles just try to split hairs to the point that they don't have to make any-

Eve:

Where did you go to college?

Kathryn:

I went to Covenant College in Lookout Mountain, Georgia.

Eve:

I have some friends who went there. How was that experience for you?

Kathryn:

It was actually fairly good. What I always say about that is I liked my professors, but I did not really have a great relationship with the administration. A lot of the professors were much less conservative than the denomination, the PCA as a whole, and figured out ways to work around the denominational stuff to actually teach students what they needed to learn.

Eve:

That sounds pretty similar to my experience at Grove City.

Kathryn:

I had an art professor who canceled class once to tell us to all go listen to a feminist scholar talk about art and something at University of Tennessee Chattanooga.

Eve:

Nice.

Kathryn:

Our whole class went to that.

Eve:

Cool. Is there anything else you want our listeners to know about HSLDA? Thank you for coming on.

Kathryn:

Thanks for asking me. I guess I wouldn't be surprised if HSLDA starts rebranding soon, because they've been floating trial balloons about the idea that homeschooling is great for LGBT kids and that HSLDA has actually done more for LGBT kids than LGBT activists.

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Eve:

Wait, what? Didn't they counter-protest LGBTQ activists coming to PHC?

Kathryn:

Yeah.

Eve:

Wow.

Kathryn:

Will Estrada is trying to float that on Facebook. I wouldn't be surprised if they tried to float that again.

Eve:

Will Estrada is one of their lawyers.

Kieryn:

That's not going to go down. I will not let that stand.

Eve:

From the Queer Homeschool Convention, fuck that, or eff that.

Kathryn:

Never mind the fact that in 2004 they tried to get national federal constitutional same-sex marriage ban passed.

Kieryn:

All of their work is very much not ... It's very anti queer kids and queer people in general.

Eve:

PHC had this whole scandal where they-

Kieryn:

None of that. None of that.

Eve:

They had this whole thing at PHC where there was a queer PHC-er blog with anonymous bloggers who were talking about it, and it caused a ruckus on campus, because they were like, "You have to sign a statement of faith to attend PHC. If you sign a statement of faith, you can't be queer, so there are no queer people at PHC."

Kieryn:

Yeah, because that's a thing that you can just be like, "Yeah, no, I'm not queer. I signed a piece of paper signing away my queerness."

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Eve:

How many queer people do we know who came out of Patrick Henry College?

Kathryn:

So many.

Kieryn:

Most of the people that I know who went to Patrick Henry College.

Eve:

So many. So many.

Kieryn:

I don't know that I know anyone ... No, that's not true, the Harrises. The Harrises I don't think are queer, but everybody else I know who went to Patrick Henry I'm pretty sure is.

Eve:

In terms of liberal people, I only know one person who's straight.

Kathryn:

As a matter of fact, I wrote a paper in law school about LGBT students at Christian schools entirely because when I was looking for a topic, that was right when Farris was going after Queer PHC. That's how I ended up working on the brief in Perry and Windsor that actually swung Kennedy on marriage.

Eve:

Wait, you want to tell us a little bit more?

Kathryn:

I took a class in law school about sexuality, gender, and the law. I wrote a paper about LGBT students at Christian colleges and trying to figure out a balancing act for religious freedom and non-discrimination. Because of that, I was asked to contribute to work on a youth voices amicus brief in Perry and Windsor, which were the cases about Prop 8 and the Defense of Marriage Act. That brief actually has been credited by a lot of legal scholars as being the one that swung Justice Kennedy on marriage equality.

Eve:

Congratulations.

Kathryn:

Basically there's [inaudible 00:47:37] Mike Farris going after Queer PHC [inaudible 00:47:40] marriage equality.

Eve:

Mike Farris, the founder of the feast.

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Kieryn:

It's beautiful.

Eve:

When we all get book deals, we should dedicate our books to him.

Kathryn:

Definitely.

Kieryn:

Thank you for giving me the impetus to undo all of your work.

Eve:

Thank you for coming on. It's been great talking to you and hearing all the things that you know.

Kathryn:

Thanks for asking me to be on.

Kieryn:

Thanks for listening, everybody. Check out our Patreon. It's Kitchen Table Cult Pod, I think. Kitchen Table Cult Pod on Patreon. We'll see you next week.

Kathryn:

We need to do another Kitchen Table Cult After Adult Dark episode where we get drunk or stoned and talk about maybe our favorite crazy Bible stories or something like that.

Kieryn:

I'm here for this. We should do that.

Kathryn:

Because there's a lot of them. Sign up for Patreon if you want to be part of that. Join us next week.

Kieryn:

Bye. Bye.