



New York City Teacher Allegedly Fired for Being Devout Christian

A New York City special education teacher has said that her faith and spirituality provoked harassment, teasing, and finally, wrongful termination last June. Though the school claims that Anita Wooten Francis was fired for grabbing a child, Francis insists that the school manufactured that story in order to hide the real reason for her termination: her Christian beliefs.



According to Francis, she adhered to school policy and did not influence her students regarding her faith. However, she admits to praying for her students before and after they entered and exited the classroom, listening to Christian music when she was alone in her classroom, and leading a worship group during non-instructional hours.

Francis, who taught at P.S. 224 in the Canarsie section of Brooklyn for 16 years, claims that she had no issues until Principal George Andrews arrived in 2004. Francis indicates that Andrews often remarked on Francis's Christian beliefs, and was unafraid to be offensive regarding his disdain for her faith.

The *New York Post* [reports](#) of such encounters:

In one instance, [the principal allegedly] criticized the disabled woman for using the elevator and told her to take the stairs. When she protested, he allegedly said, "Why don't you just pray?" Then he laughed.

At the same time, she says, the school was going to hell in a handbasket, with school administrators charging students for bake sales "even though no charity received the proceeds," and using money from the school's Special Needs Funds to pay for lunches and parties, the suit claims.

Additionally, Francis reports that Andrews would "constantly" tease her that "he was aware that she and other Christians were praying to have the demons removed from his spirit, but that it was not working."

Francis contends that it was not until she began to complain about these various issues that she was falsely charged with putting her hands on a child.

Francis remarks that such a "trumped up" charge is absurd, as she suffers from nerve damage in her hands from a number of medical problems.

"Sometimes I will drop my Bible because my hands go numb and I have no feeling. How in the world am I going to grab a child?" she asked.



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on May 24, 2011

In addition to her full-time teaching position, Francis serves as a Sunday school teacher and has worked in several afterschool programs for the Police Athletic League. One of her colleagues, who wished to remain anonymous for fear of retribution, described Francis as “a fantastic lady [who] gave her life to the kids [and] wouldn’t hurt a fly.”

Nevertheless, like other New York City teachers under investigation, Francis spent time in the “rubber room” (officially called “[reassignment centers](#)”) and was fired shortly after.

Francis is now suing the Department of Education on charges of religious discrimination and other unspecified damages, fully confident that “the truth will come out.” A former union representative for para-professionals is currently appealing her termination.

Fox News’ conservative pundit Glenn Beck covered the story on Monday, [May 23](#), and posed several questions, specifically regarding the investigation of Francis:

She was sent to the rubber room. That’s where the teachers accused of misconduct, like fondling children, are sent away from the students. Sometimes in New York, they’re there for years. Well this teacher spent a few weeks there before she was fired. Oh yeah, they got her out right away!

The award-winning documentary entitled *Waiting for Superman* provided a glimpse into the New York City “rubber rooms.” As noted by Accuracy in Academia’s [review](#) of the documentary, rubber rooms are often “where bad teachers are sent — teachers who molest their students, for example, or chronically lazy teachers who have caused more problems than they’ve solved at public schools.” In other words, rubber rooms are typically reserved for teachers facing heinous charges, forcing some to ask if Francis belonged there in the first place. (See, also, <http://www.rubberroommovie.com/>.)

Furthermore, *Waiting for Superman* also revealed that the average stay in the rubber rooms is three years, during which time teachers receive their full pay and benefits.

Why is it, then, that Francis’ investigation seems to have been expedited and concluded in a length of time significantly less than most other teachers undergo?

The New York City Department of Education declined to comment on the situation, or Francis’ appeal of her termination.



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