



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on July 15, 2011

TOMS Shoe Charity Bows to Pressure; Cuts Tie with Focus on the Family

Liberal do-gooders don't like it when their self-promoting benevolence gets mixed up with conservative Christian values. So when homosexual and abortion activists found out that Blake Mycoskie of TOMS Shoes, one of their favorite charities, had appeared at an event sponsored by Focus on the Family (FOTF) to discuss "faith in action," they were furious.

The TOMS charity, called [One for One](#), is simple and effective. For every pair of TOMS shoes a customer purchases, the company gives a pair to a child in need. Since its founding TOMS has given over 1,000,000 pairs of shoes to needy children all over the world.



Such an impacting and compassionate effort sounds like a great fit for anyone wanting to make a difference in the world, including conservative Christians who embrace traditional family values, right? *Wrong*, according to those whose values tend more toward normalizing homosexual behavior and pushing abortion on demand.

When the website [Jezebel.com](#) picked up on a [Christianity Today](#) story that had included an off-hand comment about Mycoskie's appearance at the Focus event, the gals at [Ms. Magazine](#) launched a fast and furious petition drive through the liberal activist website [Change.org](#), demanding that the TOMS founder apologize for his partnership with Focus which was identified as an Anti-Gay, Anti-Choice, Anti-Woman Group and promise that he would never make such a grave error in judgment again.

Fearing the loss of customers and damage to his impacting outreach, Mycoskie quickly responded to the petition, repenting of his inadvertent slip. Had I known the full extent of Focus on the Family's beliefs, I would not have accepted the invitation to speak at their event, Mycoskie humbly explained. It was an oversight on my part and the company's part and one we regret.

Conceding that he and his company chose poorly in reaching out to the millions of individuals, families, and Christians who support FOTF, who buy and wear shoes, and who love to help needy children, Mycoskie emphasized to his other customers that he wanted nothing at all to do with the Focus on the Family crowd. Contrary to what has been reported, said Mycoskie, Focus on the Family is not a TOMS giving partner.

Then, to make certain that his position was clear, Mycoskie concluded by emphasizing that his partnership with FOTF had been a mistake, and that both TOMS, and I as the founder, are passionate believers in equal human and civil rights for all meaning, apparently, that he and his company support the normalization of homosexuality. That belief is a core value of the company and [one] of which we are most proud.



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As the controversy expanded across the homosexual [blogosphere](#), eventually being picked up by the major news media in search of a filler story, [FOTF responded](#) to Mycoskies backhanded *mea culpa*, with Focus president Jim Daly explaining that his organization had invited the shoe company founder to its event because we thought his story would inspire other Christians to act on their faith like he has and to help others in need. In an attempt to alleviate any potential acrimony over the controversy, Daly added that he and FOTF want to tell our friends about the great work TOMS does and how they can be a part of putting shoes on the feet of impoverished kids.

Addressing the vitriolic petition drive that prompted Mycoskie to distance himself and his company from FOTF, Daly said, This is an unfortunate statement about the culture we live in, when an organization like ours is deemed unfit to help children in need simply because we hold to biblical beliefs about marriage and family. He added that the controversy provided a chilling statement about the future of the culture we live in. We have to wonder: What will someone decide were unfit to do next?

To those tempted to lash out against the groups targeting FOTF as hateful and bigoted, Daly said that as Christians we have the greatest example of all to follow in situations like this Jesus. The things He stood for were not always popular, either. He was ostracized and much worse for doing the work of His Father. And through it all, He loved those who did not love Him and never stopped hoping they would come to know the Truth.

Turning to his organizations pro-family mission, Daly affirmed that, yes, we believe marriage is a sacred, lifetime union between one man and one woman. Yes, we advocate in the public policy arena for laws that uphold that truth. Nonetheless, he added, the same Bible that tells us Gods design and intent for marriage also tells us all people are created in His image and are worthy of dignity and respect.

Daly noted that while he and FOTF may disagree with those who spearheaded this effort to get TOMS to distance themselves from us, our desire is not so much to defeat them at the ballot box as it is to bring them closer to the heart of Jesus Christ the only hope any of us have for the forgiveness and overcoming of our sins.

Looking back on the controversy, writers on both sides of the issue questioned Mycoskies sincerity in insisting that he wasnt fully aware of FOTFs beliefs and mission. For example, the alternative *LA Weeklys* [Queer Town](#) reporter Patrick Range McDonald wrote that in an era of easy Google queries, when its second nature to do a quick, Internet search of someone or some group, its hard to believe no one in [Mycoskies] company didnt [sic] check out Focus on the Family.

Further, the shoe company founder is no stranger to the Christian community, where FOTF is a well-known presence. [Christianity Today](#) noted that, according to a recent report, Mycoskie attends the clearly evangelical [Mosaic Church](#) in California pastored by Erwin McManus, a Christian author and speaker with theological ties to the [Southern Baptist Convention](#). Assumedly that would place Mycoskie in an atmosphere where homosexuality is identified as sin and, thus, incompatible with the Christian faith. Mycoskie would certainly be sensitive to the red flags of anti-gay bigotry homosexual activists insist is rampant in the Christian community.

Apparently, however, no bells or whistles went off in Mycoskie's brain, either with regard to FOTF or the other overtly Christian groups with which he and TOMS have partnered in their One for One charity. For example, [Christianity Today](#) reported, Mycoskie has worked with the popular Chicago-area Willow Creek Church, and is scheduled to participate in its [Catalyst](#) evangelical outreach effort later this year. According to the *LA Weeklys* McDonald, Willow Creek promotes the idea that gays can



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change and become straight, and if they are unable they should be celibate. McDonald also noted that in 2008 the church was targeted for some tutoring in gay issues by the notorious homosexual Christian group [Soulforce](#), founded by former Billy Graham and Jerry Falwell ghost writer Mel White.

Also, last year TOMS held one of its Style Your Sole shoe events at Abilene Christian University in Texas, a college that, the [New York Times](#) reported, has refused to allow students to form a Gay-Straight Alliance club. Wondered McDonald: If Mycoskie would have turned down Focus on the Family had he known the full extent of their convictions and mission, why didnt he do the same for Willow Creek and Abilene Christian University? Did he not vet them either? Or did he not really care all that much about their policies toward gays?

While McCoskies excuse for embracing and then dumping FOTF and its millions of partners when pressed by the homosexual militia seems suspect, to say the least, of even greater concern is how quickly a simple outreach of compassion such as Mycoskies could be co-opted for political gain by a battalion of online homosexual and pro-abortion storm troopers.

Writing on [BeliefNet.com](#) about the aggressive and ongoing attacks against conservative organizations such as FOTF, the Family Research Council, and the American Family Association, to name a few, veteran Christian author and editor Rob Kerby wondered: Could the intent be to smear and silence some of the most effective Christian ministries in America? To blacken their names because they have dared to speak out in the political battle over same-sex marriage?

Kirby recalled the effort late last year by the leftist [Southern Poverty Law Center](#) (SPLC) to convince the national press to shun 13 Christian groups because they were hate groups. In addition to FOTF, FRC, and the AFA, the group attacked such mom-and-pop organizations as [Abiding Truth Ministries](#), the [Chalcedon Foundation](#), and even the [Faithful Word Baptist Church](#) of Tempe, Arizona.

Some 150 public officials and pro-family leaders came to the defense of the targeted groups, coalescing behind a national ad campaign that denounced SPLCs blacklisting attempt as intolerance pure and simple. Declared the full-page ad running in national venues around the nation: Elements of the radical left are trying to shut down informed discussion of policy issues that are being considered by Congress, legislatures and the courts. Our debates can and must remain civil but they must never be suppressed through personal assaults that aim only to malign an opponents character.

In the end, the campaign against FOTF and the TOMS shoe charity boiled down to the choice of a relatively small group of self-absorbed individuals to place their own goals and motives above the immediate needs of the children that Mycoskie and TOMS are helping with the additional aid of individuals from across the political and cultural spectrum.

Perhaps [Candace Chellew-Hodge](#), a pro-homosexual Church of Christ pastor and editor of an online magazine for Gay Christians, placed the issues in its clearest perspective when she wrote: Have we come so far down the road of partisanship that we cant even come together with people with whom we disagree to help children in Africa get shoes? If we trot out the old, tattered, What would Jesus do? question, I think wed find Jesus helping put shoes on people no matter who his shoulder rubbed up against while doing it.

Photo: Blake Mycoskie, founder of TOMS Shoes, on right: AP Images



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