

Lisa B. Riley
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To Whom it May Concern:

On March 14, 2018 students at Carlsbad High School joined in the National Day of Action,(NDA) a walk-out against gun violence and for gun control. Nationally, this walk out was organized by students and numerous well-funded organizations. Later that month, retired Supreme Court Justice Stevens called for the repeal of the 2nd Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. These events prompted my son, Will Riley, to organize a movement countering these anti-2nd Amendment voices. A CHS senior at the time, with zero finances, and only the help of a few friends, Will created "Stand for the Second" (SFTS) in defense of our constitutionally protected rights. Although Will doesn't hunt or own a gun, he believes strongly in individual liberties. He set a pro-2nd Amendment walk-out for May 2, 2018, and began working diligently to promote his cause. In little over a month he had an editorial published in numerous newspapers, did over 30 radio interviews, including National Public Radio, and appeared on television at least eight times. The national media finally picked up his story the night before the walk-out, including national broadcasts on Fox Business, Fox News and The CBS Evening News. A few national organizations stepped in and offered some organizational support, but this was truly a grassroots movement. On May 2, 2018 thousands of students from over 500 schools around the nation participated in the the SFTS Walk-Out, and it was all started by a student who went to k-12 in the Carlsbad Municipal Schools.

I'm writing to address the disparate and discriminatory manner in which SFTS was treated by the school system through Principal Adam Amador, particularly in contrast to his treatment of the NDA walk-out. These actions are a clear example of viewpoint discrimination, and like any form of discrimination, are unacceptable in the public schools. While this happened in April and May of 2018, I waited until my son had graduated and had his final transcript sent to his college before raising this issue, because I feared retaliation.

Principal Amador supported, even assisted, the anti-gun walk-out in March. He not only made sure the students were not penalized in any way for participating in the walk-out, he went so far as to send an email to the teachers with "tips for support" encouraging them with to "Meet with the student leaders." He offered counselling and every accomodation at his disposal to assist the students in their anti-gun efforts. He assured them that any extra security was for their protection, not to quell their expression. Teachers were encouraged to talk with the students about their views and to relate the issues to their curriculum... to look for "teachable moments." (See exhibit A, attached).

Consider, by contrast, the way Principal Amador treated Will Riley, SFTS, and even myself as a parent. When Will decided to take a stand, chief among his concerns was that the walk-out be done in the least disruptive manner possible. He went to Principal Amador in an effort to comply

with any applicable rules, and to keep his efforts open and above board. Unfortunately, he was met with immediate hostility from Principal Amador. In this first meeting Amador unbelievably stated, "The Second Amendment is not even a part of the Bill of Rights." Will pointed out, that it actually is, since the Bill of Rights is the first 10 amendments to the constitution, but Amador was undeterred, and continued arguing that it was not. More to the point, Amador was rude, challenged Will's political beliefs, and told him, "Your logic, has no logic!" I would urge you to read or listen to the included links, as examples of the level of logic and respect Will projects when he writes or speaks. Principal Amador made it clear, his beef was not just with student walk-outs, not just with Will Riley, he had a problem with the political position of defending the 2nd Amendment. He challenged Will about other political issues. He disagreed with Will's political positions, and made that fact very clear.

In stark contrast to the support, and counselling offered to the anti-gun students, Amador threatened Will with criminal charges, stating NUMEROUS times, "If anything goes wrong, it's all coming down on you!" and "You will be charged with Inciting a Riot!" (Which is not actually a criminal charge under NM Statutes.) Fortunately, Will had the knowledge to not be intimidated by these empty threats. A more timid student might have given up at this point, and Amador would have won, successfully silencing an opinion he didn't agree with.

Principal Amador asked Will to come back for a second meeting with the superintendent. However, when Will arrived at the meeting instead of the superintendent, Amador had brought in 5 police officers, in another attempt at intimidation. Again, the threats of criminal charges, and holding Will personally responsible for anything "anyone" did wrong were repeated numerous times. Many students would have abandoned their plans in the face of such intimidation. One of the officers present later told Will, "You know, all that stuff Amador said was BS."

The SFTS walk-out was scheduled for 16 minutes (one minute less than the NDA walk-out). Principal Amador insisted the ONLY time it could be held was the last 16 minutes of the day, hardly the ideal time for a walk-out, but Will complied and set it for 3:44 PM on May 2.

Will worked extremely hard promoting Stand for the Second in the weeks leading up to May 2, as did many of his friends. On April 30th, I had signs printed on copy paper from an image Will emailed me, at a cost of over \$100.00, and Will put them up at school. However, when Will arrived at school on May 2, he was met in the parking lot by Amador, holding a handful of the signs. He angrily informed Will that he may not "be able" to have the walk-out after all, because Will had "broken our agreement by violating the student handbook" in that Will did not have the signs pre-approved through central office. This was a blatant fabrication by Amador. There is no such requirement found in the handbook. Amador demanded Will take down all the signs, which of course, he did. In addition to inventing a rule designed to censor information about SFTS, Amador strongly implied that he could deny students the "right" to free speech and assembly, based on a minor infraction of any rule, even a nonexistent one. Apparently, the

“deal” was if Will did everything exactly right, Amador would allow him to exercise his constitutional rights.

Earlier that morning, Amador had called a staff meeting regarding the SFTS walk-out. By all reports he was openly hostile toward the SFTS, and spoke rudely and disrespectfully about Will to the entire staff, stating “This kid’s logic has no logic!” Interestingly, using the same words that he used when he spoke to Will in his office weeks earlier, and confirming his opposition to Will’s political VIEWPOINT.

Principal Amador told the teachers they were not to post or like anything on social media about SFTS, because it would be taking a political position while on the job. (Which is what he did when stating, “This kid’s logic, has no logic!”) The teachers were forbidden to have any involvement with SFTS at all. Then Amador announced an entirely new “rule” that any student who had left campus earlier in the day would not be allowed back on campus for the walk-out. This was especially problematic since Will’s fellow seniors were largely involved in SFTS, and further most seniors did not have a 7th hour class, so they would have already left campus before the time Amador had designated for the walk-out. Normally, students were free to return to campus throughout the day, and frequently did so, to turn-in or assignments, attend practices, or pick up other students, but for some reason, Amador was changing the rules for May 2nd. To be fair, Amador did reverse himself on this new rule later that day, but why he would ever have implemented it speaks volumes about his attitude and motives. He disagreed with SFTS, and was abusing his authority to hinder the walk-out in any way he could.

At this meeting, Amador announced no media would be allowed on campus. Interestingly, there is no such restriction mentioned in his email regarding the first walk-out. Amador stressed to the teachers the SFTS walk-out was the last 16 minutes of the day, and if any students remained on campus after the designated time he, “Had instructed the police to arrest them and charge them with loitering!” Another threat, and another arbitrary rule change, as students are often on campus for a short period of time after the final bell, without fear of arrest. Amador’s repeated threats of arrest stand in sharp contrast to the assurances given to the National Day of Action students, that law enforcement was there “for their protection, and not to quell their expression.”

The message to the teachers in the staff meeting was very clear. Amador did not like SFTS, and while he may not be able to stop it, he was going to do everything he could to hinder it. Moreover, the teachers better not do anything to assist or support it in any way. No “teachable moments” here, apparently. Three different teachers told Will about this meeting later that morning, and he contacted me at work. Having watched my son pour his heart and soul into this effort for the past month, and having seen the enormous success he was having at a national level, the fact that his own principal was attempting to sabotage these efforts at the last minute did not sit well with this Mom. With only four hours until the walk-out, and a principal who was clearly hostile, I knew there was no time to waste contacting Principal Amador, so I went over his head. I placed several calls to central office, left voicemails and talked to at least

one secretary. I let her know that Amador's attempt to interfere was not acceptable, and Will's efforts had been joined by some powerful national organizations who were just waiting for some school district to do something foolish, by way of viewpoint discrimination, and there would certainly be a lawsuit if there were attempts to interfere with this walk-out. These were not empty threats. The Firearms Policy Coalition actually sent an email to the superintendent that same day threatening legal action due to Amador's behavior. (See ex. B)

Lunch hour on May 2 was hectic at our house. Will was doing live radio and TV interviews from the living room, kids were making signs and getting ready for the walk-out, and news crews were there filming. In the midst of this, I received an unexpected call from Amador on my cell phone, I had never spoken to him before, and have not since. He said he thought I may be under the impression that the walk-out had been cancelled and that it had not been cancelled. He also repeatedly and emphatically informed me, "I am the principal!!!" I told him I didn't think it had been cancelled, but rather that he was taking actions to hinder it, and he had called a staff meeting and announced several restrictions which had not applied to the NDA walk-out. Rather than discuss my concerns, or deny my allegations, Amador had only one question for me, "Who told you that?" When I refused to tell him, he said, "If you won't divulge your source, then this conversation is OVER!!!" I responded that if he failed to give the SFTS kids the same courtesies and accommodations he gave the first walk-out, then the conversation was far from over. Principal Amador then hung up on me. Hanging up on a parent is rude and unprofessional, but the bigger problem with this phone call is Amador ignored the real issue and instead focused on finding out who told us what he said. What would he have done with that information? When I refused to tell him, he went immediately to the childish or bullyish tactic of ending the conversation.

My husband and I went to the high school and watched our son lead the walk-out and deliver a speech. More than one teacher told us they weren't allowed to go out to the walk-out, and one added, "Or we'll get fired." The kids were all exceptionally well behaved, and adults from Carlsbad were gathered in the areas outside of the campus showing their support with American Flags. National media was sent to Carlsbad, but were not allowed on campus, as they routinely are for sports and numerous other events, so they remained just beyond the fence, covering the event as best they could. (See ex. C) Due to Amador's threats, Sheriff Cage personally attended the walk-out to ensure the student's constitutional rights were not violated.

It was a proud day for our family and for Carlsbad, and it should have been for Carlsbad Municipal Schools. Will Riley, a public school student in a state ranked 49th in the nation for education, from a C- rated school district, had earned national accolades for his knowledge of history and politics, and for the articulate and respectful way in which he expressed his opinions. He organized and inspired students in over 500 schools from NY to CA to support our constitutionally protected rights, and he did it without the money or the national media promotion given to the NDA. While some individual teachers quietly and fearfully encouraged and supported Will, the official stance of CHS was to hinder his efforts by intimidating, bullying, lying

and creating obstacles. Why? Simply because Amador didn't agree with Will Riley's position. He argued politics with Will the first time they met. That's what this is about. He believes Will's logic has no logic. Apparently, Principal Amador also believes his job duties include gatekeeper of opinion expression. Those with whom Amador agrees get support and an open forum to speak. Those with whom Amador disagrees are publicly ridiculed, threatened with arrest, and hindered with arbitrary rules designed only to quell their expression. He made threats without regard to the truth of his statements, fabricating both school rules and statutory criminal charges. (See ex. D)

Apparently, Carlsbad Municipal Schools supports free speech... as long as the principal agrees with the content. This is discrimination, pure and simple, and it has no place in the public schools. You simply can not roll out the red carpet for those on one side of an issue, and throw up roadblocks for those on the other side of that same issue. There can be no justification for such behavior.

Let's be clear, this is NOT a school walk-out issue. This is a discrimination issue. If the problem were walk-outs, the anti-gun walk-out would have been treated the same way as the SFTS walk-out. Even if there is never another walk-out at CHS, that doesn't solve the problem. As long as you have an employee who is willing to wield his power to stifle any opinions with which he disagrees, you have a problem and a legal liability. Such abuse of power could be used to discriminate against school clubs, assisting the formation of those a principal likes, while hindering those he does not like. Whether it be Chess Club, LGBTQ Students or Young Federalist Society, should make no difference. Opinions stated in school newspapers, assignments, student council elections and countless other situations are vulnerable to this type of discrimination. Further, anyone could be a target, depending solely on the prejudices of any individual principal.

My son graduated in May, and will soon be leaving for college. So, why would I bother to bring this up now? Simply because it's wrong, and it will continue if left unchecked. If you, as a board, don't stop this behavior, you are condoning discrimination, and it absolutely will continue to happen. Maybe by this principal, maybe by another school employee. Maybe based on a difference in viewpoints, maybe based on a difference in skin color, religion or sexual orientation... based on ANYTHING a particular employee in power doesn't agree with. For the Carlsbad Schools, this a policy issue, and certainly a personnel issue, and it is now in the hands of the board, I urge you to do the right thing.

I'll close with a quote Will used in his walk-out speech: "All tyranny needs to gain a foothold is for people of good conscience to remain silent." --- Thomas Jefferson

Sincerely,

Lisa B. Riley

