

WCLP Files Lawsuit to Protect the Right to Witness at Los Angeles Mall

Torrance, CA--The Western Center for Law and Policy has filed a lawsuit against the largest public real estate company in the United States, the Simon Property Group, Inc., for its part in violating the civil rights of two Los Angeles area Christian evangelists. Simon Property Group is the owner of the Del Amo Fashion Center, in Torrance, California.

In September, three Fashion Center security guards harassed and threatened two local Christians who had been respectfully sharing their faith with a number of interested individuals shopping at the Center. In spite of the fact that the two men had caused no disruption, and there had been no complaints by mall patrons or retailers, the three security guards detained them as they were leaving the Center. The guards took a very aggressive posture while interrogating the men about their activities, and acted with unnecessary and unprovoked hostility.

Ultimately, the guards told the men that because of their conduct, they were banned from the mall for three (3) months, and if they did not cooperate, that they would be “banned for life.”

“The Center’s actions are a clear violation of our clients’ civil rights,” declared Dean Broyles, President of the Western Center for Law & Policy. “Shopping malls in California, while technically private property, are required by law to allow individuals to use the property for free expression and petition without discriminating or creating content-based restrictions.”

The Del Amo Fashion Center, however, sought to ban the Plaintiffs in this case for peacefully sharing the Gospel with interested passersby, while at the same time allowing numerous other expressive activities to occur at the Center. For example, in addition to hosting 10k races for charity, putting up a Salvation Army “Giving Tree,” and providing weekly concerts on Center property, the Center also permitted the Chabad of South Bay to host its annual Menorah Lighting Ceremony in the Outdoor Promenade for the last two years.

“Malls must treat all religious groups equally, and can not discriminate against any person just because the Mall or its staff do not approve of the content of the speech,” Mr. Broyles noted.

For more information about this case, please contact the Western Center for Law and Policy via our web site at www.wclplaw.org or at 760-747-4529.