Case Study

Christian School Expels Nude Dancer’s Daughter

A Sacramento private school has expelled a kindergarten student three weeks before the end of school year, saying her mother’s work as a nude dancer clashes with its Christian philosophy.

Christina Silvas, 24, of Rancho Cordova said one reason she took the job as a dancer at the Gold Club Centerfolds off Highway 50 was so she could afford the $400 monthly tuition at Capital Christian School.

“If you choose to do the wrong thing willfully, then God’s word instructs me as to what my responsibility is,” said Rick Cole, head pastor of Capital Christian Center. “I need to be faithful to my calling.”

Silvas, who previously worked at the church as a Sunday school teacher, has a different view.

“I thought the church was supposed to accept everybody,” she said. “That’s my understanding of what God is about. My daughter is the one who goes to school there, not me, and they’re turning her away.”

Silvas, who is single, said school administrators telephoned her last week and told her that in response to persistent rumors, a parent went to the strip club’s Web site, downloaded pictures of Silvas and brought them to school staff. Silvas told them she does dance at the all-nude bar, which doesn’t serve alcohol and subsequently met with Cole.

As head pastor of Capital Christian, which at 4000 members is one of the largest Assemblies of God churches in the country, Cole had final say on the matter.

Silvas said Cole told her not only will her 5 year old daughter be expelled, but as long as she keeps her job at the club, neither she nor her daughter can attend church there.

Silvas said her daughter enjoys the school’s daily worship sessions and was looking forward to the end-of-the-year pool party and graduation ceremony. She hasn’t told the girl why she won’t be able to go to school next week.

“I’m still trying to figure out what I’m going to tell her,” she said.

Silvas said that when she enrolled her daughter, she signed a statement that stipulated she would abide by the school’s Christian commitment/philosophy and that “weekly church attendance is necessary for continued enrollment at CCS.”

The statement also reads, in part, “CCS is interested in maintaining partnerships with our parents regarding the standards and criteria of a Christian learning structure that involves the entire family.”
By working as an exotic dancer and refusing to change her vocation, Silvas violated the school’s philosophy, Cole said.

Seeking a resolution, Silvas and Cole met privately Tuesday. “I talked to her for over an hour, letting her know how much God cares about her and loves her and that he has a much better plan for her that what she is doing with her life right now,” Cole said.

He promised that if Silvas quit her job, he and the church would forgive her, help her, and even waive tuition for the month of June.

“My understanding was she would come back to me after thinking about it and let me know her decision,” Cole said. “It’s very stunning to me to see it on the news. We’ve been thrust into this media craze, but not by our desire.”

Silvas said the decision is not simple and couldn’t be made that quickly. “I have other expenses besides my daughter’s tuition,” she said. “I am also concerned with providing a comfortable life for my daughter.”

Silvas said she feels she is be demonized. “I’m trying to let them know we’re not evil because of our work, and we do have an awareness of God. My job is legal, it’s not illegal.”

Though Silvas is considering legal action, experts in education law say that may not be a good option.

“In a private school, it’s hard to make a breach of contract action because they have the right to kick a kid out at any time for any reason,” said Michael Sorgen, an education lawyer from San Francisco.

Even though the school has the legal right to expel the child, that doesn’t make it right.