

Principle Rights Coalition – Press Statement

U.S. District Court Decision – *Brown v. Buhman* 12/13/13 – Polygamy Decriminalized

As representatives (in part) of Fundamentalist Mormon families and communities, we express our gratitude to Judge Clark Waddoups of the Federal District Court for striking the cohabitation prong of Utah's bigamy statute on Friday, December 13th, 2013.

For over 130 years, various state and federal statutes have targeted our deeply-held religious beliefs and family arrangements. These statutes were enforced arbitrarily and, by their vague and overbroad definitions, they brought fear into the lives of many families, prompting thousands to seek isolation rather than face selective prosecution. As Judge Waddoups observed in this case, convictions for unlawful cohabitation appear to have focused solely on Fundamentalist Mormons who were legally married to just one spouse.

In his ruling, Judge Waddoups makes generous reference to the opinion published by Utah Supreme Court Justice, Christine Durham, in her dissent in the Rodney Holm bigamy case. Both Durham and Waddoups insist that, in light of a chain of recent U.S. Supreme Court decisions, the singling out of a religious minority for unfavorable treatment (merely on the basis of its "*religious cohabitation*" lifestyle) is a violation of the First and Fourteenth Amendments to the Constitution, and an attack on at least six key Constitutional protections. We are especially pleased that the 91-page decision exposes the racism and imperialism which permeated the Supreme Court's 1879 *Reynolds* decision. We agree with Judge Waddoups that it is time for *Reynolds* to join other defunct rulings such as *Davis v. Beason* and *Bowers v. Hardwick*, all of which deprived people of rights.

We are indebted to Kody Brown and his four wives for risking harm to their family to challenge this oppressive and virtually unenforceable statute. We thank Professor Jonathan Turley for his hard work and dedication to this cause. We thank the many other attorneys who have worked tirelessly and selflessly over two decades to lay the groundwork for this victory.

We are grateful to our many unnamed supporters who jeopardized their careers and livelihoods to defend us and speak the truth when the truth was not welcome. We pay tribute to our many faithful ancestors who spent time behind bars for their religion and saw their families torn apart because of political agendas.

The impact of this decision is both immediate and yet to be realized. As a coalition, we will continue to seek broader acceptance through education and service, building bridges between a maligned culture and the rest of society. We remain committed to the right of all families to exist.

We trust that this momentous ruling will stand, and that our families can now step out of the shadows and into full citizenship.

the Principle Rights Coalition
including representatives of:

Apostolic United Brethren
Centennial Park
Davis County Cooperative
Nielsen/Naylor group
Independent Fundamentalist Mormons

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