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The Scandal of the Cross -Controversy in Florida

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Graduation ceremonies for four Brevard County, Florida high schools became the focus of both controversy and court action this past week as a small group of students and parents objected to the site for the ceremonies—a local church facility.

The building, home to the [Calvary Chapel](#) congregation in Melbourne, features minimal Christian symbolism, but does display a cross as a architectural detail on the wall behind the pulpit. That's just too much for Jennifer Musgrove, a senior graduating from Palm Bay High School. Jennifer and her father, along with another parent, argued that holding the public school graduation ceremony in the church facility represented an intolerable and unconstitutional establishment of religion.

As usual in cases like this, attorneys for the group [Americans United](#) represented the plaintiffs in federal court. Barry Lynn, AU executive director, commented: "This kind of symbolic joining of government and religion makes some families feel like they're second- class citizens." On Wednesday, U.S. District Judge Gregory A. Presnell rejected the AU attempt to force a relocation of the ceremonies, citing a lack of time for the schools to make other plans. Nevertheless, the judge did comment that the schools should have found a more secular location for the ceremonies, and he allowed the case, *Musgrove v. School Board of Brevard County*, to continue in order to determine a ruling for future ceremonies.

As for the church—it refused to cover the cross for the ceremony. Spokesperson Melody Glover told the Associated Press that the church was glad to allow the schools to use its facility, but it would not hide its identity. "It's part of who we are," She said.

Here we see the secularist agenda at the limits of sanity. The schools told the court that other facilities were less accessible to the disabled, cost more money, or ran the risk of rain. No matter. If the courts rule that the presence of a cross is sufficient ground to force a relocation, the schools will simply have adjust. That's the agenda of groups like American United.

The ground of offense here is interesting. Are we to believe that the mere presence of a cross is sufficient to wound the sensitivities of a few graduates? Is the cross that powerful a symbol? The Apostle Paul told the Corinthian Christians that the cross is foolishness "to those who are perishing," but the power of God to those who are being saved [1 Corinthians 1:18]. Of course, Paul was speaking of the *preaching* of the cross. It appears that the mere shape of the cross has a similar effect on some in Brevard County, Florida. Any way you look at it, the cross remains a scandal.

DOCUMENTATION FOR THE DETERMINED: See coverage from the [St. Petersburg Times](#), [Florida Today](#), the [Lakeland Ledger](#). See also a press release from [Americans United](#).

