

---

# NEWS RELEASE

## For Immediate Release

September 19, 2011

## CONTACT:

Ambassador Randolph M. Bell  
(804) 643-1786

[caff@firstfreedom.org](mailto:caff@firstfreedom.org)

## Does Religion Infringe Upon the Rights of Women?

Thursday, September 22, 2011, 7:00-8:30 p.m.

University of Richmond School of Law, Moot Courtroom

On the evening of September 22, 2011, a panel discussion will kick off a series of four public programs addressing the question: *Does Religion Infringe upon the Rights of Women?* The images evoked are powerful, especially as social equality for women has advanced. Yet, the realities are complex, as in some circumstances, religion seemingly restricts, while in others, it seemingly enhances the rights of women.

“This week’s discussion will set the tone as panelists with a pluralistic variety of viewpoints illustrate how charged issues can be addressed in informed ways without reliance on stereotypes or generalizations,” stated Ambassador (ret.) Randolph Bell, President of the First Freedom Center. “The series will take as its starting points the rights enshrined in American law and in the universally-binding instruments of international law, and then consider those human rights from the perspectives both of jurisprudence and of religious and philosophic communities.”

This engaging topic will be examined in public forum with the first discussion held at the [University of Richmond School of Law Moot Courtroom](#) from 7:00-8:30 p.m. Panelists include:

- [Henry L. Chambers, Jr.](#), Professor of Law, University of Richmond
- [Joanne B. Ciulla](#), Professor of Leadership and Ethics, University of Richmond
- [Mimi Hanaoka](#), Assistant Professor of Religious Studies, University of Richmond
- Ailya Sherbano Vajid, Program Fellow, Karamah Muslim Women Lawyers for Human Rights

The event will be moderated by [William L. Sachs, PhD](#), First Freedom Center Director of Education.

Subsequent panel discussions will consider the aspects of the theme, including the impact of fundamentalist forms of religion, the requirement of modest dress in some religious communities, and religion’s role in women’s access to healthcare. Each event will offer diverse perspectives, and all events are free and open to the public.

This series of public presentations is hosted by a partnership of the First Freedom Center; the Chaplaincy, Jepson School of Leadership Studies, Religious Studies, and School of Law at the University of Richmond; and the Religious Studies Program in the School of World Studies at Virginia Commonwealth University. The purpose of the series is to inform and engage the public in important religion, human-rights and public-policy issues that are in the headlines nearly every day.

# # #

**First Freedom Center:** The First Freedom Center is a politically and religiously neutral 501(c)3, whose mission is to advance the fundamental human rights of freedom of religion and freedom of conscience. It takes seriously the rights of believers and non-believers alike. It bases its efforts on the heritage of the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom of 1786, the First Amendment to the United States Constitution, and the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. As Jefferson, Madison, Mason and other founders did not shy from the controversial themes of their own time—but rather championed the freedom of Virginians to express their differences without hindrance—so the First Freedom Center grasps the difficult issues of our own age, making sure only that there is a free marketplace, both of convergent and of divergent views. Visit [www.firstfreedom.org](http://www.firstfreedom.org) for more information.

**University of Richmond Chaplaincy:** The mission of the Office of the Chaplaincy is to inspire generous faith and engage the heart of the University. The Chaplaincy focuses on five strategic goals to advance its mission to create structures of inclusion for the diversity of faith traditions present on campus, including its 18 partner campus ministries more robustly in the mainstream of campus life; to provide pastoral care to all members of the University community, particularly students; to develop programming for students to pursue spiritual renewal, reflection, and critical engagement with their own experience and those of others; and to animate conversations of meaning across lines of difference to cultivate the highest ideals of responsible living and learning. Visit <http://chaplaincy.richmond.edu> for more information.

**University of Richmond Jepson School of Leadership Studies:** The Jepson School draws upon the liberal arts to advance the understanding of leadership and the challenges of ethical and effective engagement in society. The study of leadership explores fundamental questions about who we are, how we live together, and how we influence the course of history. It exemplifies the spirit of the liberal arts: to educate people to take an active role in the world. The Jepson School helps students realize their distinctive capacities and apply their learning for the good of society. The Jepson School fosters students' understanding of leadership and encourages them to lead lives of consequence that connect intellectual pursuits with moral and competent leadership. The Jepson School advances scholarly understanding of leadership, nationally and internationally. The Jepson School enhances public understanding of leadership. Visit <http://jepson.richmond.edu> for more information.

**University of Richmond Religious Studies:** A brief look at contemporary events suffices to explain why it is important to study and understand religion. By introducing students to a wide variety of religious traditions, the department's curriculum helps students think broadly and clearly about this critical force in world affairs. Religious Studies majors learn thinking, reading, writing and communication skills that prepare them for all sorts of future careers and advanced degrees. Visit <http://religiousstudies.richmond.edu> for more information.

**University of Richmond School of Law:** The School of Law educates students to become outstanding lawyers and leaders in their communities. The mission of the School of Law is to serve society and the legal profession by educating law students in the highest traditions of the profession, by contributing to the marketplace of ideas, and by service to the community and nation. Visit <http://www.law.richmond.edu> for more information.

**Virginia Commonwealth University Religious Studies Program:** The Religious Studies Program in the School of World Studies is guided by the idea that becoming knowledgeable about humanity's Religious traditions is vital to promoting global understanding, cooperation, compassion, and community. Through academic teaching, scholarship, study abroad programs, and public engagement, Religious Studies faculty and students are building bridges to a socially just and sustainable world. Visit <http://www.has.vcu.edu/wld/academics/majors/relstudies> for more information.