

Texas Sheriff Threatens to Arrest Owner of Truck with Anti-Trump Decal



Dallas, November 17 (RHC)-- In the U.S. state of Texas, a sheriff has suggested criminal charges are possible for the owner of a white truck that bears a profane message for President Donald Trump and his supporters, sparking a debate about the line between obscene words and freedom of speech.

"F*** TRUMP AND F*** YOU FOR VOTING FOR HIM" reads the decal in bold white letters. A hand with a middle finger extended sits in the middle of the decal.

In a statement posted on Facebook, Fort Bend County Sheriff Troy E. Nehls said he had received numerous calls about the offending sticker. The truck is often seen along a state highway near Richmond, Texas. He asked for tips on the identity of the truck's owner and said he would "like to discuss it" with the owner.

"Our Prosecutor has informed us she would accept Disorderly Conduct charges regarding it, but I feel we could come to an agreement regarding a modification to it," Nehls wrote. In the comments, Nehls also had posted the legal definition of disorderly conduct in Texas. A disorderly conduct charge targets a person who intentionally "uses abusive indecent, profane, or vulgar language in a public place" or "makes

an offensive gesture or display in a public place" that "tends to incite an immediate breach of the peace."

Coming forward upon hearing of the threats, Karen Cook Fonseca, who owns the truck with her husband, told reporters she put the decal up about 11 months ago. She said there was "no particular reason" they decided to stick the message on the back of the truck. She said: "We wanted our statement out there. That's our opinion on him."

The decal has gone viral several times, she said, and she gets plenty of feedback on the road. She receives some negative reactions, particularly among older white men, but most people stop to laugh, tell her stories or ask where to buy it, Fonseca said.

Fonseca, who has children, said she's heard the criticism from some parents. But she said that having children doesn't make you lose your freedom of speech. She said: "I'm not going to remove it because I know I'm not violating any laws or rules."

The sheriff's Facebook post sparked an intense discussion among commenters, with a number of them suggesting the First Amendment protected the phrase. The American Civil Liberties Union of Texas asked the truck owner to contact the organization and offered the sheriff a free legal tip.

"Constitutional Law 101: You can't ban speech just because it has "f@ck" in it," the group wrote.

Legal experts pointed to a case that was tried more than 40 years ago in the U.S. Supreme Court. In the 1971 case of Cohen vs. California, the high court overturned the conviction of a man who wore a jacket in a courtroom with the words "F*** the draft." The 5-4 ruling found those words would not immediately incite violence and should be considered protected political speech.

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