

Kelvin Cochran – BIO

Kelvin Cochran dedicated over 30 years of his life to fighting fires and protecting the communities in which he's lived and worked. After being born into extreme poverty in Shreveport, Louisiana, Kelvin knew he wanted more out of life. At the age of five, he watched firemen fight a fire that had started in his neighbor's house and determined that he wanted to be a firefighter. He got his start in his hometown and worked his way up the ranks to become its Fire Chief in 1999, where he served until he was appointed Fire Chief for the city of Atlanta in 2008. His exemplary service record drew the attention of President Obama, who in 2009 appointed Kelvin as the U.S. Fire Administrator for the United States Fire Administration, the highest office in the profession. After the city "begged" him to return, Kelvin resumed his post as Atlanta Fire Chief in 2010.

Kelvin is actively involved at Elizabeth Baptist Church, where he is a deacon and leads a men's Bible study. Inspired by his faith, Chief Cochran wrote "Who Told You That You Were Naked?" a book which details the state of man since the fall of Adam in the Book of Genesis. The takeaway of his book is that only in Christ can men be rescued from their fallen condition and fulfill their purpose as husbands and fathers.

Chief Cochran's book, "Who Told You That You Were Naked?" briefly discusses the clear biblical teaching that sex is reserved for marriage between a man and a woman. The mere statement of this well-known Christian belief, in a book written for men's Bible study in his off-time, drew the ire of people seeking to redefine marriage who claim that Kelvin, in his official capacity as fire chief, shouldn't be able to keep his job because his thoughts and beliefs don't conform to theirs.

The city of Atlanta initially suspended Chief Cochran for 30 days without pay and ordered that he undergo sensitivity training. An investigation revealed that he had not discriminated against anyone, but at the end of his suspension he was fired.

Alliance Defending Freedom represented Chief Cochran in a suit filed against the city in federal court to vindicate his rights, including his rights to free speech and freedom of religion.

A federal court ruled that the city suspended and terminated Chief Cochran because he did not get permission from the city to write the book – a requirement that the court found to be an unconstitutional prior restraint on speech. Government cannot require a permission slip for its employees to write on important matters like faith and values in their off time. Those requirements are unconstitutional precisely because they enable the government to play speech favorites, approving messages it likes and denying requests for disfavored speech (like that of Chief Cochran's here).

In October 2018, the city of Atlanta agreed to pay its former fire chief, Kelvin Cochran, \$1.2 million in the wake of the federal court ruling.