1	IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES
2	x
3	ALBERT SNYDER, :
4	Petitioner :
5	v. : No. 09-751
6	FRED W. PHELPS, SR., ET AL. :
7	x
8	Washington, D.C.
9	Wednesday, October 6, 2010
10	
11	The above-entitled matter came on for oral
12	argument before the Supreme Court of the United States
13	at 10:02 a.m.
14	APPEARANCES:
15	SEAN E. SUMMERS, ESQ., York, Pennsylvania; on behalf of
16	Petitioner.
17	MARGIE J. PHELPS, ESQ., Topeka, Kansas; on behalf of
18	Respondents.
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1 PROCEEDINGS (10:02 a.m.) 2 3 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: We'll hear argument 4 first today in Case 09-751, Snyder v. Phelps. 5 Mr. Summers. б ORAL ARGUMENT OF SEAN E. SUMMERS 7 ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONER 8 MR. SUMMERS: Mr. Chief Justice, and may it 9 please the Court: 10 We are talking about a funeral. If context is ever going to matter, it has to matter in the context 11 of a funeral. Mr. Snyder simply wanted to bury his son 12 13 in a private, dignified manner. When the Respondents' 14 behavior made that impossible, Mr. Snyder was entitled 15 to turn to the tort law of the State of Maryland. 16 JUSTICE SCALIA: Are we just talking about a 17 funeral? That's one of the problems I have with the There was also this video that -- that your 18 case. 19 client watched, right, later, after the funeral? 20 MR. SUMMERS: There was a flier that was sent out prior to the funeral. We have the funeral and 21 22 we have what they described as the "epic," which was put 23 on the Internet afterwards, which --24 JUSTICE SCALIA: Right. Well, what does that have to do with the funeral? 25

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1 MR. SUMMERS: As the district court 2 explained, and the circuit court followed their logic, and I think the facts at trial confirmed this, that the 3 4 epic was essentially a recap of the funeral protest 5 itself. That's -б JUSTICE SCALIA: That's fine, but it -- it 7 does not intrude upon a funeral. I mean, no. You -you either have two separate causes of action -- one is 8 the intrusion upon the funeral, and the other is the 9 harm caused by viewing this -- this posting on the 10 Internet. But I don't see how they both relate to 11 12 intrusion upon the funeral. 13 MR. SUMMERS: Well, the --14 JUSTICE SCALIA: And they were just 15 submitted to the jury as one big lump, right? 16 MR. SUMMERS: Well, we had the flier that was submitted, that was sent out before the funeral. We 17 had the facts of the funeral. And, yes, the epic did --18 19 of course, we focused on the personal, targeted comments in the epic when we presented our evidence. But, yes, 20 21 it was --22 JUSTICE SCALIA: Suppose there hadn't been a funeral protest, just the epic. Would that have 23 24 supported the cause of action you -- you assert here? MR. SUMMERS: I think that's a closer call. 25

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But when we have the personal --1 2 JUSTICE SCALIA: Yes or no? 3 MR. SUMMERS: I would say yes, because we 4 have the personal, targeted epithets directed at the 5 Snyder family. б JUSTICE SCALIA: Even though it's -- he 7 doesn't have to watch them? They're just posted on the 8 Internet. 9 MR. SUMMERS: That's correct, 10 Justice Scalia. 11 JUSTICE SCALIA: It's his choice to watch 12 them, but if he chooses to watch them he has a cause of 13 action because it causes him distress. 14 MR. SUMMERS: Well, the -- he has a cause of 15 action. That doesn't mean he's going to win. You still 16 have the pleading standards, the summary judgment 17 standards, and the motion to dismiss standards. JUSTICE GINSBURG: Well, why does he have a 18 19 -- a claim? As I understand it, after this case arose Maryland passed a statute putting time, place, and 20 manner restrictions. I read that statute, and it seems 21 22 to me that there was nothing unlawful, nothing out of compliance with that statute, that was done here. 23 24 It was at considerable distance. There was 25 no importuning anyone going to the funeral. It stopped

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before the funeral, the service, began. 1 Am I right that, under the current statute, 2 3 this conduct was not unlawful? 4 MR. SUMMERS: Justice Ginsburg, the statute wasn't in place at the time. But there's a complicated 5 б answer to the question, because they were positioned about 30 feet from the main vehicle entrance to the 7 church, and they rerouted the funeral procession so they 8 were 200 to 300 feet away from there. 9 10 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Didn't they -- didn't they stand where the police told them to? 11 MR. SUMMERS: Well, they -- they told the 12 police where they wanted to stand, and the police said 13 14 okay. So the police didn't say, please stand here. They said -- in fact, they sent out a flier --15 16 JUSTICE GINSBURG: And they were there to 17 the knowledge of the police and with the permission of the police. 18 19 MR. SUMMERS: It's true they did not violate any criminal statutes, Justice --20 21 JUSTICE ALITO: Is there anything to suggest 22 that the Maryland legislature, in enacting that statute, 23 intended to occupy the field of regulations of events 24 that occur at funerals? 25 MR. SUMMERS: I believe the -- the Maryland

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legislature made it clear that they didn't want people 1 2 to protest funerals in general. When you --3 JUSTICE GINSBURG: But they didn't prohibit it. 4 5 MR. SUMMERS: They did prohibit it under б certain circumstances and in a certain --7 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Which this the case, which the facts here meet. 8 9 MR. SUMMERS: For statutory enforcement. But what we're dealing with here is tort law. 10 11 JUSTICE SCALIA: Well, if that statute 12 applies to any protest at funerals, protesting the 13 Vietnam War, protesting whatever, your case involves, at 14 least if we accept your version of it, a protest of the 15 -- of a dead soldier who -- who is going to Hell and 16 whose parents have raised him to go to Hell. So simply 17 to say you can have a protest within a certain distance is not to say you can have a protest within a certain 18 19 distance that -- that defames the corpse. That's --20 that's a different issue, isn't it? 21 MR. SUMMERS: That's our position, yes, 22 Justice Scalia. And --23 JUSTICE GINSBURG: You -- you knew just what 24 was going on. Do you suppose -- because this had been 25 done before. In fact, wasn't this the very same day

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they picketed at Annapolis and at the State Capitol?
 MR. SUMMERS: They picketed, yes, those
 three locations that day.

4 JUSTICE GINSBURG: So they knew what the signs were going to be. Could they have gotten an 5 б injunction, do you suppose, against this protest? 7 MR. SUMMERS: I don't think they could have beforehand because, although you said we knew what the 8 signs were going to be, generally from their pattern I 9 10 think we could guess what the signs may have been, but you don't really know what the signs are going to be 11 until they show up. For example, in this case, they had 12 13 a sign that said "Priests Rape Boys"; they had a sign 14 that said "God Hates You"; "You're Going to Hell." 15 JUSTICE GINSBURG: So you could go into 16 court and say the signs were this, that, or the other

17 thing at the State Capitol, the same signs at Annapolis; 18 they're going to use the same signs at this protest. 19 MR. SUMMERS: As -- Justice Ginsburg, from

20 our perspective, the signs that said "God Hates You";
21 "You're Going to Hell" referred directly to Matthew
22 Snyder, and we would hope and believe that the district
23 court could enjoin those types of specific targeted
24 epithets.

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If, for example, this was done at a public

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park in Montana, logically I think you could conclude 1 2 that it wasn't directed at the family. But when you 3 show up at a 20-year-old Marine's funeral and say 4 "You're Going to Hell" --5 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Did they have the "Going б to Hell" sign at the State Capitol at Annapolis? 7 MR. SUMMERS: They had -- the majority of 8 the signs were the same, yes. 9 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Those particular ones 10 that you mention, did they have those at the other two? 11 MR. SUMMERS: Yes. I believe the only ones 12 that they changed were they have a sign for each 13 different branch of the service. Matt was a Marine, so 14 he --15 JUSTICE GINSBURG: So it sounds like the 16 "you" is the whole society, the whole rotten society, in 17 their -- in their view. MR. SUMMERS: If we're forced to accept 18 19 their view, yes, Justice Ginsburg, that's what they 20 testified to. Mr. Snyder's view, the view of the Fourth Circuit, was that these "God Hates You" and "You're 21 22 Going to Hell" signs specifically referred to Matthew 23 Snyder and the "Thank God for Dead Soldiers" -- Mr. 24 Snyder certainly interpreted that as referring to his 25 son, because after all Matthew Snyder was the only

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1 deceased Marine/soldier at the funeral.

JUSTICE GINSBURG: Where did -- you said the 2 Fourth Circuit found that those signs targeted the 3 family rather than the whole U.S. society? 4 5 MR. SUMMERS: The "God Hates You" and the б "You're Going to Hell" sign were the ones that the 7 Fourth Circuit said they can avoid that issue, because they can simply say this was hyperbolic and protected 8 9 pursuant to its interpretation of Milkovich under defamation law and then its extension of 10 11 Hustler v. Falwell. 12 JUSTICE ALITO: Do you think that the epic 13 is relevant as an explanation of some of these arguably 14 ambiquous signs that were displayed at the funeral? For example, "You're Going to Hell"; "God Hates You" -- who 15 16 is "you"? If you read the epic, perhaps that sheds 17 light on who "you" is. 18 MR. SUMMERS: It can shed light, but if you 19 put this in the context of a funeral-goer, 20 Justice Alito, what you have is -- it was a typical 21 funeral. Family members driving in and --22 JUSTICE ALITO: Well, yes, but the signs say 23 "you," and the argument is made "you" doesn't mean 24 Matthew Snyder; it means a larger group. And then you have the epic, which is directed directly at Matthew 25

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1 Snyder. Doesn't that show -- shed light on what "you"
2 meant on those signs?

3 MR. SUMMERS: Correct, and that's where I 4 was going to go with that, Justice Alito. The epic 5 specifically referenced Matthew Snyder by name, 6 specifically referenced Matthew's parents by name. So 7 in our judgment, and the defendants testified that the 8 epic sort of explained, at least in their explanation, 9 explained the funeral protest itself.

10 JUSTICE BREYER: I'm not certain that this 11 is about the funeral. I mean, I understand there was a funeral in it, but the First Amendment question seems to 12 13 me a different -- possibly a broader and different 14 question. Did your client see the signs? I gather from the record he didn't see what the signs were; he just 15 16 saw tops of signs. So he didn't read anything on the 17 signs; is that right?

MR. SUMMERS: He didn't read the content. JUSTICE BREYER: So he hadn't seen them. So how does -- how did your client find out that the signs, the tops of which he saw at the funeral when the demonstrators were standing with the approval of the police, 300 feet away -- how did he find out what they said?

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MR. SUMMERS: Your Honor, 2 days in advance,

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1 they sent out a flier announcing they were going to protest the funeral. They had Matthew Snyder's picture 2 3 there. They claimed they were going to protest at 4 St. John's Catholic dog kennel. 5 JUSTICE BREYER: Did they say in -- my б question is, how did your client find out these very 7 objectionable things on the signs? How did he find out what they said? 8 9 MR. SUMMERS: He found out about the specifics of the signs --10 11 JUSTICE BREYER: Yes, that's what I'm 12 interested in. 13 MR. SUMMERS: -- by going to the family wake 14 immediately following and seeing it on the television. 15 JUSTICE BREYER: Okay. So now we have two 16 questions. One is, under what circumstances can a group 17 of people broadcast on television something about a private individual that's very obnoxious? And because 18 19 of the funeral, you said that -- I accept that from your 20 point of view; that is very obnoxious. And the second is, to what extent can they put that on the Internet, 21 22 where the victim is likely to see it? Either on 23 television or by looking it up on the Internet. 24 Now, those are the two questions that I'm very bothered about. I don't know what the rules ought 25

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to be there. That is, do you think that a person can 1 2 put anything on the Internet? Do you think they can put 3 anything on television even if it attacks, say, the most 4 private things of a private individual? Does 5 Maryland's -- does Maryland's law actually prohibit б that? We know it does. And what should the rules be 7 there? 8 Have I said enough to get you talking? 9 (Laughter.) MR. SUMMERS: Yes, Your Honor. 10 11 Right now the rule we're stuck with is Hustler v. Falwell for intentional infliction of 12 13 emotional distress, and the --14 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Your -- your claim is 15 that Hustler was a -- Falwell was a public figure, and the Snyder family is not. So I think what I got from 16 17 your brief is you don't fall under that case because you're not dealing with a public figure. 18 19 MR. SUMMERS: That's correct, Justice 20 Ginsburg. 21 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Okay. Were you 22 finished --23 JUSTICE BREYER: Well, you can go ahead and 24 finish --25 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Were you finished

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1	answering Justice Breyer's question?
2	JUSTICE BREYER: The more you say about
3	this, the happier I'll be, because
4	(Laughter.)
5	JUSTICE BREYER: I'm quite interested.
б	MR. SUMMERS: The private, targeted nature
7	of the speech, in our judgment, is what makes it
8	unprotected. So, for example, the epithets directed at
9	the family would be unprotected. If, for example, a
10	person repeatedly put on the Web site that Mr. Smith has
11	AIDS, whether it's true or not, essentially at some
12	point in time, it might rise to the level of an
13	intentional infliction of emotional distress. There
14	would have to be other facts combined there.
15	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: You so you have
16	no objection if the sign said "Get out of Iraq" or
17	antiwar protests; in other words, not directed at this
18	particular individual?
19	MR. SUMMERS: Correct. I don't think
20	there'd be
21	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: So no objection
22	there?
23	MR. SUMMERS: I don't think there'd be any
24	constitutional impediment to bringing or the
25	Constitution would not would bar that claim from

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1 going forward.

JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Excuse me --2 3 JUSTICE SCALIA: So the intrusion upon the privacy of the funeral is out of the case then, right, 4 5 because that sign would intrude upon the privacy of the б funeral just as much? That's not really what you're 7 complaining about. You're complaining about the personal attacks, aren't you? 8 MR. SUMMERS: Yes, Justice Scalia, and I 9 think under a certain scenario, you could have --10 regardless of the signs, you could have a scenario where 11 12 the funeral was disrupted, and it was disrupted in this 13 case. 14 JUSTICE GINSBURG: It was or it wasn't? 15 MR. SUMMERS: It was, Justice Ginsburg. 16 JUSTICE GINSBURG: I thought that -- that 17 when the service itself began, the protesters stopped. MR. SUMMERS: The police testified that, I 18 19 think it was, about 8 minutes after the funeral started, 20 that the protesters left the area. 21 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Were they heard and 22 deterred --23 JUSTICE SCALIA: I thought that they had to 24 turn in a different entrance? Is that -- is that the 25 extent of the disruption?

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MR. SUMMERS: Well, according to, I believe, 1 all the witnesses, yes, they had to come in --2 3 JUSTICE SCALIA: In order to avoid the 4 protest? MR. SUMMERS: That, and they certainly took 5 б away -- according to the priest that was coordinating 7 the mass, they certainly took away the peaceful experience that all private figures --8 9 JUSTICE SCALIA: But you wouldn't have objected to that if there weren't these nasty signs, you 10 just said, right? 11 MR. SUMMERS: No. I said -- I hope I said, 12 13 Justice Scalia, that under the right context, just the 14 signs alone -- if that's all we're saying, there's a 15 sign out there that says "God Hates America," I don't think that we could have a claim there. But if they, in 16 17 fact, disrupted the funeral, I do think in some set of facts there could be a claim. 18 JUSTICE SCALIA: All right. 19 20 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Counsel, I'm trying to tease out the importance of the -- whether the person's 21 22 a private nature or public figure -- a private person or 23 a public figure. Does it make a difference if I am directing public comments to a public or private figure? 24 MR. SUMMERS: Well, in the context of 25

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defamation, we had the Rosenbloom followed by the Gertz
 decision.

3 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: No, I'm talking about in 4 terms of infliction of emotional distress. If I am 5 talking to you as a Marine, if you were a Marine, and I б was talking about the Iran war and saying that you are 7 perpetuating the horrors that America is doing and said other things that were offensive, would you have a cause 8 9 of action because you are being called a perpetrator of the American experience? 10 11 MR. SUMMERS: I'd think there'd be -- have 12 to be a lot more facts involved, harassing type of 13 facts. The --14 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: But you're saying yes. 15 So public speech, speech on a public matter, if directed 16 to a private person, should be treated differently under 17 the law? I think that was part of what Justice Breyer 18 was asking. Is that what your position is? 19 MR. SUMMERS: Public speech, even directed to a private figure, should be treated differently than 20 as directed towards a public official. 21 22 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: All right. And under what theory of the First Amendment would we do that? 23 24 What case would stand for -- our case -- stand for the 25 proposition that public speech or speech on a public

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1 matter should be treated differently depending on the 2 recipient of the speech? 3 MR. SUMMERS: Gertz v. Welch treated the 4 public versus private figure status different, albeit --5 JUSTICE GINSBURG: That was defamation, б wasn't it? 7 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: That's defamation. That's false -- truth or falsity. But --8 MR. SUMMERS: Correct. Correct, but the 9 problem is the only other case we have that deals with 10 11 intentional infliction of emotional distress from this Court is Hustler v. Falwell, and Hustler v. Falwell 12 13 clearly dealt with a public figure. The States have 14 interpreted Hustler v. Falwell as not applying to a 15 private figure. 16 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: But have they done it in 17 the context of differentiating between public and private speech? 18 MR. SUMMERS: Yes, there is an Illinois case 19 20 that we've cited in the brief where it was specifically said it was a matter of public concern, and they said 21 22 the plaintiff was not a public figure; therefore, the --23 just you have to meet the elements of intentional 24 infliction of emotional distress. JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: I was not talking about 25

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State cases. I was talking about a Supreme Court case
 that suggested that we would treat -- we would treat the
 First Amendment and the right to -- to speak on public
 matters differently, depending on the person to whom it
 was directed.

6 MR. SUMMERS: I think Gertz v. Welch says 7 that. Dun & Bradstreet says you have to at least look 8 at the context of the situation.

9 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: So it always goes to the 10 context. Now, going to the context of this speech, do 11 we look at the words on a sign alone, or do we look at 12 the entire context of what all of the other signs said 13 at the demonstration, to determine whether or not the 14 speech here was public or private speech?

MR. SUMMERS: I think you have to look at the particular signs, because if you don't, anyone could come up with a public concern, because they could direct any type of epithets at a person. In the middle of their paragraph they could say I'm for taxes or I'm against taxes. And, therefore, the entire statement would be --

JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Well, in that case --JUSTICE SCALIA: Mr. Summers, I'm a little concerned at your apparent acceptance of -- of the proposition that if one comes up to a Marine and says,

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1 you're contributing to a -- a terribly unfair war, that that alone would -- would form the basis for the -- the 2 tort of intentional infliction of an emotional distress. 3 4 What -- what are the requirements for that? 5 I thought that it had to be outrageous conduct. Doesn't б it have to be outrageous conduct? 7 MR. SUMMERS: It does, Justice Scalia, and I 8 wasn't suggesting that --9 JUSTICE SCALIA: Well, I mean -- I mean, why 10 accept that as -- as parallel to what -- to what you're 11 claiming here? 12 MR. SUMMERS: And I hope I didn't. What I 13 meant to say, if I didn't, was there would have to be a 14 lot more facts involved to rise to the level of an intentional infliction of emotional distress case if you 15 16 just told the Marine, for example, you're not in favor 17 of the war. JUSTICE BREYER: What about the -- taking --18 19 if you have an instance where the defendant has said on 20 television or on the Internet something absolutely outrageous. You show that. You show that it was 21 22 intended to and did inflict serious emotional suffering. 23 You show that any reasonable person would have known 24 that likelihood. And then the defendant says: Yes, I did that, but in a cause, in a cause. And now -- in a 25

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1 cause that we are trying to demonstrate how awful the 2 war is.

At that point, I think the First Amendment might not leave this alone. But if it's not going to leave this alone, there's where we need a rule or we need an approach or we need something to tell us how the First Amendment in that instance will begin to -- enter and force a balancing.

9 Is it that you want to say no -- no punitive 10 damages in such a case? Or that you would have to 11 insist upon a particularly clear or a reasonable 12 connection between the private part of this and the 13 public effort?

14 Have you thought about that at all? Because 15 that's where I am thinking and having trouble. MR. SUMMERS: The -- I think the standard 16 17 should be Hustler v. Falwell generally does not apply --JUSTICE BREYER: Hustler -- Hustler v. 18 Falwell is defamation. 19 20 MR. SUMMERS: I thought Hustler v. Falwell was intentional infliction of emotional --21 22 JUSTICE BREYER: Intentional infliction, okay, good. Thank you. Go ahead. 23

24 JUSTICE KAGAN: Mr. Summers --

25 JUSTICE BREYER: Well, answer then, please.

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1 MR. SUMMERS: I think the rule should be 2 Hustler v. Falwell generally does not apply to a private 3 figure unless the defendants can show some compelling 4 connection there, and if you --5 JUSTICE BREYER: Compelling. б MR. SUMMERS: If you -- or at least 7 reasonable, rational connection. In this case, they don't even claim there's a connection. They just used 8 this moment to hijack someone else's private event when 9 they are grieving over a 20-year-old child's funeral. 10 11 JUSTICE KAGAN: Mr. Summers, Hustler seems 12 to me to have one sentence that's key to the whole 13 decision, and it goes like this. It says: 14 "'Outrageousness' in the area of political and social 15 discourse has an inherent subjectiveness about it which 16 would allow a jury to impose liability on the basis of 17 the jurors' tastes or views, or perhaps on the basis of their dislike of a particular expression." 18 19 How does that sentence -- how is that sentence less implicated, in a case about a private 20 figure than in a case about a public figure? 21 22 MR. SUMMERS: Well, at least in Hustler --23 Justice Kagan, at least in Hustler v. Falwell we had a 24 traditional area of public discourse. We had a parody. 25 I believe the opinion went to great length to explain

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1 that.

Here what we're talking about is a private 2 I don't -- I would hope that the First 3 funeral. 4 Amendment wasn't enacted to allow people to disrupt and 5 harass people at someone else's private funeral. б JUSTICE GINSBURG: So --7 JUSTICE KAGAN: But that goes back to the question that was asked previously about -- suppose you 8 9 had a general statute that just said there will be no 10 disruptions of any kind at private funerals. You know, pick your distance, 500 feet, 1,000 feet, but something 11 that didn't refer to content, that didn't refer to 12 13 ideas, that just made it absolutely clear that people 14 could not disrupt private funerals. What harm would 15 that statute not address in your case? MR. SUMMERS: Well, the States have -- in 16 17 the statutory case, they have the interest of penalizing the offending party. In tort law, the State's interest 18 19 is to provide a remedy for its citizens. Under the 20 Fourth Circuit's interpretation of these facts, Mr. Snyder has absolutely no remedy, none. He's a private 21 22 figure, a grieving father, and he is left without any 23 remedy whatsoever. 24 JUSTICE GINSBURG: We have other instances

25 where conduct is lawful, meets all the terms of the

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1	statute that's meant to govern protests at funerals, and
2	yet there's an award of damages permitted.
3	MR. SUMMERS: I believe that the
4	Hustler v. Falwell was a had several tort claims, but
5	there was no criminal statute violated. I understand
6	that it went the other way because of the public figure
7	status, but that would be an example.
8	Another example
9	JUSTICE GINSBURG: Well, that was a I'm
10	asking you for an example where a Federal case where
11	the conduct was permitted by the statute, by the
12	policemen there, and yet there was was a damage
13	award.
14	MR. SUMMERS: Justice Ginsburg, I'm not
15	aware of any case, but I think the if, for example,
16	someone sued someone for defamation, there probably
17	wouldn't be a statute that was violated so I don't I
18	would presume
19	JUSTICE GINSBURG: I'm talking about this
20	intentional infliction of emotional distress claim that
21	you're bringing.
22	MR. SUMMERS: Other than Hustler v. Falwell,
23	I do not have any Federal cases to cite to you. The
24	State cases we cited in our brief
25	JUSTICE ALITO: Is this a situation in which

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1	all conduct that complies with the Maryland funeral
2	protest statute is lawful? If the Maryland legislature
3	said this is the these are the exclusive regulations
4	that apply here, so that if someone came up to Mr.
5	Phelps at the funeral and spat in his face, that would
6	not be that wouldn't be illegal?
7	MR. SUMMERS: Justice Alito, I don't know
8	whether that would be criminally
9	JUSTICE ALITO: Because it's not
10	specifically prohibited by the statute?
11	JUSTICE GINSBURG: Well, it certainly
12	wouldn't be because of the distance. I mean, you'd have
13	to be a lot closer than the Maryland statute allows to
14	spit in someone's face.
15	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Perhaps you would
16	like to answer Justice Alito's question.
17	MR. SUMMERS: I believe that you could
18	commit a tort and still be in compliance with the
19	criminal code, Justice Alito.
20	JUSTICE SCALIA: Mr. Summers, can I can I
21	ask this? Suppose suppose I don't think you have a
22	cause of action for invasion of privacy when these
23	people were at this distance from the funeral. But that
24	was one of the causes of action submitted to the jury.
25	If I disagree with you on that cause of

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action, I suppose I'd have to say there has to be a
 retrial now.

3 MR. SUMMERS: Of course, this Court could do 4 that, Justice Scalia, but --

5 JUSTICE SCALIA: So you have to support both 6 causes of action here, the intentional infliction of 7 emotional distress and the invasion of privacy, right? 8 MR. SUMMERS: Yes, Justice Scalia. But 9 according to the Fourth Circuit, we agree that the 10 Respondents waived that issue by not appealing that 11 issue.

12 JUSTICE SCALIA: Waived -- waived what
13 issue?

MR. SUMMERS: The invasion -- or elements of the invasion of privacy. They didn't contest that we met the elements of the tort. They -- they contested the constitutional issue, but not whether or not we met the elements of the tort.

JUSTICE SCALIA: Oh, all right. Okay.
MR. SUMMERS: Could I reserve the remainder?
CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel.
Ms. Phelps.
ORAL ARGUMENT OF MARGIE J. PHELPS
ON BEHALF OF THE RESPONDENTS
MS. PHELPS: Mr. Chief Justice, and may it

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1 please the Court:

2	When members of the Westboro Baptist Church
3	entered an ongoing, extensive, public discussion and
4	wide array of expressive activities taking place in
5	direct connection with the deaths and funerals of
б	soldiers killed in Iraq and Afghanistan, they did so
7	with great circumspection, and they did so with an
8	awareness of the boundaries that have been set by the
9	precedents of this Court.
10	JUSTICE KAGAN: Ms. Phelps, suppose
11	suppose your group or another group or picks a
12	wounded soldier and follows him around, demonstrates at
13	his home, demonstrates at his workplace, demonstrates at
14	his church, basically saying a lot of the things that
15	were on these signs or or other offensive and
16	outrageous things, and just follows this person around,
17	day-to-day.
18	Does that person not have a claim for
19	intentional infliction of emotional distress?
20	MS. PHELPS: Any non-speech activity, like
21	stalking, following, importuning, being confrontational,
22	could indeed give rise to a cause of action.
23	JUSTICE KAGAN: Demonstrations outside the
24	person's home, outside the person's workplace, outside
25	the person's church demonstrations, not disruptions,

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but saying these kinds of things: You are a war
 criminal -- what -- what would -- whatever these signs
 say or worse.

MS. PHELPS: My answer, Justice Kagan, is no, I don't believe that that person should have a cause of action or would under your cases have a cause of action. You couldn't give that cause of action without direct reference to the viewpoint, which is exactly what happened in this case. And --

JUSTICE SCALIA: My goodness. We -- we did have a doctrine of fighting words, and you acknowledge that if somebody said, you know, things such as that to his face, that wouldn't be protected by the First Amendment.

MS. PHELPS: We agree that fighting words
are less protected under the First Amendment.

17 JUSTICE SCALIA: Unprotected.

MS. PHELPS: I will go with unprotected, Justice Scalia. And if I may add this: Fighting words require imminence, they require proximity, and they require a lack of those words being part of a broader political or social speech.

23 JUSTICE SCALIA: Is -- is that so? Do we 24 know that?

MS. PHELPS: I beg your pardon?

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1	JUSTICE SCALIA: Do we know that? Is it the
2	criterion of the fighting words exception to the First
3	Amendment that there be an actual fight? Certainly not
4	that. Is is it a requirement that there be a
5	potential for a fight? I doubt it.
6	MS. PHELPS: I think
7	JUSTICE SCALIA: Where where do you get
8	the notion that it has that there has to be an
9	imminent fight?
10	MS. PHELPS: I get the notion from the
11	series of cases starting within 7 years after your
12	Chaplinsky case with the Gooding case and on down
13	through the Brandenburg case and on down
14	JUSTICE SCALIA: Which say what?
15	MS. PHELPS: That say that
16	JUSTICE SCALIA: The person was too remote?
17	The fight was not was not imminent?
18	MS. PHELPS: The the definition, the
19	working definition of "fighting words," is that they
20	have to be words which by their nature are likely to
21	incite an immediate breach of the peace and not occur in
22	the context of some social, artistic, educational, or
23	political kind of speech.
24	And if I may hasten to add, Justice Scalia,
25	these Respondents were not charged with fighting words.

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The jury was not instructed to limit themselves to
 fighting words. No element of the torts under which
 liability attached included fighting words.

The words that were at issue in this case were people from a church delivering a religious viewpoint, commenting not only on the broader public issues that the discussion was under way in this nation about dying soldiers, about the morals of the nation --

JUSTICE ALITO: But is it --

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JUSTICE GINSBURG: Ms. Phelps, there's no 10 question that these signs and the signs like that we saw 11 during the Vietnam War. But you had the demonstration 12 13 at the capitol, and you had the demonstration at 14 Annapolis. This is a case about exploiting a private 15 family's grief, and the question is: Why should the 16 First Amendment tolerate exploiting this bereaved family 17 when you have so many other forums for getting -getting across your message, the very same day you did? 18 19 MS. PHELPS: Right. So several pieces to

20 that, Justice Ginsburg. When I hear the language
21 "exploiting the bereavement," I look for what is the
22 principle of law that comes from this Court? And the
23 principle of law, as I understand it, is without regard
24 to viewpoint, there are some limits on what public
25 places you can go to, to deliver words as part of a

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1 public debate. If you stay within those bounds -- and under 2 3 these torts even, this notion of exploiting, it has no 4 definition in a principle of law that would guide people 5 as to when they could or could not. And if I may -б JUSTICE ALITO: Is it your -- is it your 7 argument that the First Amendment never allows a claim 8 for the intentional infliction of emotional distress 9 based on speech unless the speech is such that it can be 10 proven to be false or true? 11 MS. PHELPS: In --12 JUSTICE ALITO: Is that your -- is that 13 argument? 14 MS. PHELPS: With a -- yes, Justice Alito, 15 and with a little bit more from your cases, if I may: 16 And not under an inherently subjective standard, and 17 where you're only claiming that the impact of the speech was adverse emotional impact. 18 19 JUSTICE ALITO: All right. Well, Justice 20 Kagan gave you one example. Let me give you another 21 example along the same lines. 22 Let's say there is a grandmother who has 23 raised a son who was killed in Afghanistan or in Iraq by 24 an IED. And she goes to visit her son's -- her grandson's grave, and she's waiting to take a bus back 25

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1 to her home. And while she's at the bus stop, someone approaches and speaks to her in the most vile terms 2 3 about her son: He was killed by an IED; do you know 4 what IEDs do? Let me describe it for you, and I am so 5 happy that this happened; I only wish I were there; I б only wish that I could have taken pictures of it. And 7 on and on. 8 Now, is that protected by the First Amendment? There's no false statement involved, and 9 10 it's purely speech. 11 MS. PHELPS: Right. And -- and it may give 12 rise to some fighting words claim, depending on the 13 proximity and the context. And I would have to know 14 what --JUSTICE ALITO: Well, it's an older -- it's 15 16 an elderly person. She's really probably not in -- in a 17 position to punch this person in the nose. JUSTICE SCALIA: And she's a Quaker, too. 18 19 (Laughter.) 20 MS. PHELPS: Justice Scalia, let us assume that the grandmother had not done what Mr. Snyder did in 21 22 this case. Mr. Snyder, from the moment he learned of 23 his son's death, went to the public airways multiple 24 times in the days immediately before and immediately 25 after --

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1 JUSTICE SCALIA: Do you think that 2 everybody --3 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: What is your answer 4 -- what is your answer to Justice Alito's question? Do 5 you think the First Amendment would bar that cause of б action or not? 7 MS. PHELPS: There would have to be a very narrow circumstance where it didn't, Mr. Chief Justice. 8 9 That's my answer. 10 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: So you think there are situations where a tort of intentional infliction of 11 emotional distress is allowed, even for a matter of 12 13 public debate? 14 MS. PHELPS: Not public debate, 15 Mr. Chief Justice. That is not the way I understood the 16 hypothetical he posed me. 17 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, I understood the hypothetical, that the person disagreed with the war 18 19 in Iraq and the sending of American troops there. 20 MS. PHELPS: Right. And knew that this elderly woman was the grandmother of a soldier. And I 21 22 would ask the question in the hypothetical, how they 23 knew, which is why I was making reference to what Mr. 24 Snyder did. JUSTICE ALITO: Well, if that --25

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1 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: The person selects 2 the grandmother because he thinks that will give maximum publicity to his views. Now, is -- does the First 3 Amendment bar that cause of action or not? 4 5 MS. PHELPS: If the grandmother entered the б public discussion, the First Amendment bars it. 7 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, no --Justice -- Justice Alito posed, the grandmother was 8 returning from the grave of her grandson. She didn't 9 enter the public discussion at all. So I'm anxious to 10 determine whether in those circumstances you think the 11 First Amendment allows that cause of action or not. 12 13 MS. PHELPS: I'm reluctant to say that it does not, Mr. Chief Justice. However --14 15 JUSTICE GINSBURG: But you gave the answer 16 before about -- you said stalking. 17 MS. PHELPS: Right. 18 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Isn't this comparable to 19 stalking? 20 MS. PHELPS: And that's what I was trying to liken it to, and that's what it sounds more like to me. 21 22 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Do you think it satisfies the normal tort or law against stalking for 23 24 someone to come up to an individual and engage in discussion? I thought a lot more was required. 25

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1	MS. PHELPS: Well, Mr. Chief Justice, I
2	would not file that claim for that person, for that
3	elderly grandmother. I am not prepared, without knowing
4	more, to say absolutely there could be no cause of
5	action. What I am prepared to say is there was
6	absolutely much more than that in this case.
7	JUSTICE ALITO: Well, if that if that's a
8	possibility there's a claim there, then what
9	distinguishes that from this case?
10	Now, I thought you were beginning to say
11	that my hypothetical is different because Mr. Snyder
12	made his son into a public figure, and the question I
13	wanted to ask in that connection is whether every
14	bereaved family member who provides information to a
15	local newspaper for an obituary thereby makes the
16	deceased person a public figure?
17	MS. PHELPS: Not the deceased person,
18	Justice Alito. We don't allege that the young man dead
19	was a public figure. We do
20	JUSTICE ALITO: But if the grandmother
21	called up the local paper and said: Let me tell you
22	something about my grandson
23	MS. PHELPS: Yes.
24	JUSTICE ALITO: who was just killed in
25	Iraq. You know, he liked football and camping.

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1 MS. PHELPS: Right. JUSTICE ALITO: That makes him -- that makes 2 3 her a public figure? 4 MS. PHELPS: It's getting closer. And 5 Justice Alito, if she went on then to say: And how many б more parents like me and my ex-wife are going to have to 7 suffer this way and when will this senseless war end, and I've gotten Congressman Murtha on the phone and 8 talked about this situation, and I'm against the war? 9 10 And then proceeded to repeat that question in the public airwaves repeatedly, then a little church where the 11 servants of God are found say, we have an answer to your 12 13 question that you put in the public airwaves, and our 14 answer is you have got to stop sinning if you want this 15 trauma to stop happening --

16 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: But Your response --17 your response to Justice Alito is dwelling on the facts 18 of this particular case.

19 MS. PHELPS: Yes, sir.

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20 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: I'm interested in 21 knowing what your position is on the broader question. 22 Can you imagine a circumstance where this same type of 23 discussion is directed at an individual and yet would 24 give rise to the tort of emotional distress?

MS. PHELPS: Yes, I can imagine,

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1 Mr. Chief Justice.

2 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: I'm sorry -- can or 3 cannot?

4 MS. PHELPS: I can.

5 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: You can.

6 MS. PHELPS: I can imagine that there could 7 be a circumstance, a hypothetical, where there was not 8 this level of involvement, and it was out of the blue 9 and it was "up close," if I may use the term, 10 confrontational.

11 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Okay. So if you recognize that there can be a tort of emotional distress 12 13 in circumstances like that, isn't that the factual 14 question of whether it rises to that level of 15 outrageousness, which is part of the tort for the jury? 16 MS. PHELPS: I don't agree with that, 17 Mr. Chief Justice, because you've now taken an inherently subjective standard with the absence of any 18 19 of these non-speech misbehaviors. And now you are back to only -- the only barrier between a person and their 20 First Amendment right to robust public debate, including 21 22 this Court has said, outrageous statements --23 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Does it make --24 MS. PHELPS: -- is that an --

25 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: I'm sorry.

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1 MS. PHELPS: -- with just that subjectively inherent standard and that subjective statement of 2 3 emotional impact. This Court has said repeatedly --4 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Does it make a 5 difference -б MS. PHELPS: -- we won't let that go. 7 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Does it make a difference, which seems to me to be the case here, that 8 Mr. Snyder was selected not because of who he was, but 9 because it was a way to get maximum publicity for your 10 11 client's particular message? MS. PHELPS: That is not accurate, 12 13 Mr. Chief Justice, with due respect. 14 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, assuming it is accurate, does that make a difference? 15 16 MS. PHELPS: The -- the motive of the speaker to get maximum exposure, which every public 17 speaker pines for, looks for, strives for, and is 18 19 entitled to -- does not change the legal principle 20 that's at play. 21 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, it might 22 affect whether or not the selection inflicts emotional 23 distress for a reason unconnected with the individual 24 who is the subject of emotional distress. 25 MS. PHELPS: Well, if --

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1 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: In other words, if 2 the person is selected because, as I indicated, it gives 3 maximum publicity, rather than because of a particular 4 connection to the matter of public debate, I wonder if 5 that makes a difference.

б MS. PHELPS: I think it makes a difference 7 when you are looking at what role the plaintiff had in that public discussion and how tied the words that they 8 seek to punish are to his role in that public 9 discussion. I think that's how you get to the point --10 11 JUSTICE KAGAN: Well, Ms. Phelps, let's say 12 that we disagree with you as to whether Mr. Snyder had 13 at all injected himself into this controversy. Or let's 14 take a case where it's clear that the father of the 15 fallen soldier had not injected himself, had not called 16 any newspapers, had not said anything to anybody, but a 17 group knew that this funeral was taking place and was there with the same signs, with the same -- are you --18 19 are you saying that that makes the difference? That there, there would be a claim? 20 21 MS. PHELPS: I'm -- I'm saying it does make 22 a difference, and no -- but no, there would not be a 23 claim there in my opinion because --

24 JUSTICE KAGAN: So it's not a difference 25 that matters.

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1	MS. PHELPS: It is a difference that matters
2	in some measure, I believe, Justice Kagan, in this wise:
3	I believe that the umbrella of protection under the
4	First Amendment that this Court has established firmly
5	is speech on public issues. Sometimes you get under
6	that umbrella because it's a public official or it's a
7	public figure, but the umbrella that you give the
8	protection for is speech on public issues.
9	Now, when a plaintiff comes to your Court
10	and says, I want \$11 million from a little church
11	because they came forth with some preaching I didn't
12	like, I think it does make a difference for the Court to
13	look closely at what role did that man have in that
14	public discussion.
15	JUSTICE ALITO: But your argument depends on
16	the proposition that this is speech on a matter of
17	public concern; is that correct?
18	MS. PHELPS: Absolutely, Justice Alito.
19	JUSTICE ALITO: So let me let me give you
20	this example. Suppose someone believes that
21	African-Americans are inferior, they are inherently
22	inferior, and they are really a bad influence on this
23	country. And so a person comes up to an
24	African-American and starts berating that person with
25	racial hatred.

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1 Now, is that -- this is just any old person on -- any old African-American on the street. That's a 2 3 matter of public concern? 4 MS. PHELPS: I think the issue of race is a 5 matter of public concern. I think approaching an б individual up close and in their grill to berate them 7 gets you out of the zone of protection, and we would 8 never do that. 9 JUSTICE KENNEDY: But that simply --JUSTICE SCALIA: Excuse me --10 11 JUSTICE KENNEDY: That simply points out that all of us in a pluralistic society have components 12 13 to our identity; we're Republicans or Democrats, we're 14 Christians or atheists, we're single or married, we're 15 old or young. Any one of those things you could turn 16 into a public issue and follow a particular person 17 around, making that person the target of your comments, and, in your view, because this gives you maximum 18 19 publicity, the more innocent, the more removed the 20 person is, the greater the impact -- the Justice Alito hypothetical in -- in the grandmother case. 21 22 So I -- I think -- I think your -- your public concern issue may -- may not be a limiting factor 23 24 in cases where there is an outrageous conduct and where there should be a tort. 25

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1 MS. PHELPS: Well, but, again, this Court 2 has given substantial, longstanding protection to speech 3 on public issues. And how could it be gainsaid that the 4 dying soldiers is not on the lips of everyone in this 5 country? And it is a matter of great public interest б and why they are dying, and how God is dealing with this 7 nation. Were you to consult the Joint Appendix and see that at the very same funeral, right outside the front 8 9 door of the church, were people with flags and signs articulating the "God bless America" viewpoint, and so 10 11 this little church --12 JUSTICE KENNEDY: But your position is that 13 you can take this and you can follow any citizen around 14 at any point? That -- that was the thrust of the 15 questions from Justice Kagan. 16 MS. PHELPS: Not follow --17 JUSTICE KENNEDY: And -- and Justice Alito, and it seems to me that there -- you should help us in 18 19 finding some line there. 20 MS. PHELPS: Yes, I will help you, Justice Kennedy, and I am pleased to do that because we 21 22 don't do follow-around in this church. We were a 23 thousand feet away, seven picketers a thousand feet 24 away, out of sight, out of sound, not just standing 25 where the police said to stand --

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1 JUSTICE KENNEDY: But in the -- but the hypotheticals point out that there can be an intentional 2 infliction of emotional distress action for certain 3 4 harassing conduct. 5 MS. PHELPS: For harassing conduct, not for б speech. Not for public speech, Justice Kennedy. 7 JUSTICE KENNEDY: But torts and crimes are committed with words all the time. 8 9 MS. PHELPS: I agree with that. And there 10 has never been any allegation in this case that the words of the Westboro Baptist Church were in any 11 category of low-value or less protected speech. 12 13 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Well, that's --14 JUSTICE SCALIA: Let's talk 15 about subjectively. You're concerned about -- surely 16 fighting words is -- you know, whether something is a 17 fighting word, that's a very subjective call, isn't it? 18 MS. PHELPS: I believe that your cases give 19 some good light on that, Justice Scalia. 20 JUSTICE SCALIA: You don't think it's subjective? 21 22 MS. PHELPS: There may be in some people's mind an element of subjectivity. My 20 years of --23 24 JUSTICE SCALIA: You think that's solid, 25 absolutely, what's a fighting word; whereas, what is an

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outrageous statement is -- is very much different from 1 what's a fighting word? I don't see the difference. 2 Besides which, isn't it the case that in 3 order to recover for the tort of intentional infliction 4 5 of emotional injury, you have to substantiate the injury б with some physical manifestation, which the plaintiff 7 here had? And, my goodness, for fighting words, you 8 don't even need that. You can just say, these words 9 angered me to the degree that I would have been inclined 10 to fight. At least for this tort, you have to have 11 physical manifestations. 12 13 Why isn't that a very objective standard? 14 MS. PHELPS: Well, because the Court said it 15 was inherently subjective in the Falwell case. And I 16 think that the language that Justice Kagan brought 17 forth, and there's a few more paragraphs that follow, 18 identify why it's inherently subjective. 19 And the way this case was tried identifies why it's inherently subjective, where although two signs 20 and then three were identified as actionable by a 21 22 strange reading of those words, all of the preachments 23 of Westboro Baptist Church, including all of the signs 24 at that picket, all of the signs at other pickets, and all their doctrines went to a jury with that inherent --25

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1 JUSTICE SCALIA: So your point depends --MS. PHELPS: -- inherently subjective 2 3 standard. 4 JUSTICE SCALIA: -- depends upon the 5 proposition that what is outrageous is more subjective б than what is fighting words, right? 7 MS. PHELPS: Well, Justice Scalia, I must hasten to say this: I am not a fan of the fighting 8 9 words doctrine. I do think it has problems. I just don't think it applies in this case. 10 11 JUSTICE GINSBURG: The Court has made that a 12 very narrow category, hasn't it? I mean, we have not 13 allowed the fighting words -- you say that to me and I'm 14 immediately going to punch you in the nose, because I 15 have -- it's an instinctive reaction. 16 I think the Court has rejected spreading 17 fighting words beyond that. MS. PHELPS: And especially not to where 18 19 there's just emotional injury. That's where I 20 particularly think, although Chaplinsky would have suggested in some broad language you would go that way, 21 22 you have not gone that way in any of the cases. And 23 again I have to reiterate, you have required immediacy 24 and intent. 25 Whether a fight ensues or not, I do

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1 understand that hasn't been pinned down as a requirement. But in intent, it's your purpose, is to 2 3 mix it up with somebody, not to go out and say: Nation, 4 hear this little church. If you want them to stop dying, stop sinning. 5 б That's the only purpose of this little 7 church. A thousand feet away could not possibly be fighting words. 8 JUSTICE BREYER: We are still worried about 9 the statements on television and on the Internet and the 10 knowledge there. And I'm not -- I'm starting -- I'm 11 12 trying to get the same answer from you I was trying from 13 your colleague. 14 Brandeis said that the right to be let alone is the most important, and so he must have been thinking 15 there could be a tort there for interference with 16 17 privacy, and the First Amendment doesn't stop State tort laws in appropriate circumstances. 18 19 MS. PHELPS: Right. 20 JUSTICE BREYER: And emotional injury, deliberately inflicted, could be one. All right. 21 22 Now -- and I think it is one. But I see that in some 23 instances that could be abused to prevent somebody from 24 getting out a public message, and, therefore, I'm 25 looking for a line.

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1	Now, let me suggest a couple. See what you
2	think. Maybe you can think of some others.
3	You could have a judge make the decision,
4	since the First Amendment is involved, not the jury, and
5	the judge could say whether in this instance it was
б	reasonable for the defendant to think that it was
7	important to interfere with the emotional life of that
8	individual.
9	You could say if that was so, there will
10	still be no there would be no punitive damages.
11	There could be ordinary damages.
12	You could remove all protection from the
13	defendant in an instance where the defendant nonetheless
14	knew, actually knew, that they were going to cause an
15	individual who's private severe injury, emotional
16	injury, irrespective of their public message.
17	So what I'm doing is suggesting a number of
18	thoughts of ways of trying to do what I'm trying to
19	accomplish, to allow this tort to exist
20	MS. PHELPS: Right.
21	JUSTICE BREYER: but not allow the
22	existence of it to interfere with an important public
23	message where that is a reasonable thing to do.
24	Now, maybe this is impossible, this task.
25	But I'd like your thoughts on it.

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1 MS. PHELPS: Thank you, Justice Breyer. And I'm taking that we are speaking now of the intrusion 2 claim, and I believe that I could offer you a compare 3 4 and contrast two extremes that may help us here. 5 On the one hand, you have a body of law that б comes under the heading of captive audience. And you 7 can go into that body of law and read all those cases in one sitting, so to speak, from which you would conclude 8 9 that it is very narrow, it is very limited, and there must be some actual physical sound, sight, intrusion, if 10 you're talking about invasion of privacy. 11 At the other extreme, for a compare and 12 13 contrast, is what they seek in this case, what the trial 14 judge gave them in this case, which is: In an unspecified period of time that each individual will 15 call their mourning period, no one, at any time, any 16 17 place, any manner, may say any word that that mourner says caused me emotional distress. 18 19 JUSTICE ALITO: Why aren't the members of 20 the family --21 MS. PHELPS: That would chill too much 22 speech. 23 JUSTICE ALITO: Why aren't the members of 24 the family of the deceased a captive audience at the 25 funeral?

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1	MS. PHELPS: If if we were right outside
2	the door like the other expressers were in these
3	exhibits, they might have been. Your body of law about
4	captive audience, when you Hill v. Colorado, Madsen,
5	Schenck that line of cases recently, taking the
б	picketing, where they, by the way, specifically said at
7	footnote 25, this isn't about content. You've got to be
8	up again, I will uses the colloquial term up in
9	your grill. The term I think the Court used was
10	"confrontational."
11	Now, you can't be a captive audience with
12	to someone that you couldn't see when the test is
13	JUSTICE ALITO: Well, I thought the targeted
14	picketing of a person's house is not protected by the
15	First Amendment.
16	MS. PHELPS: Focused picketing, per Frisby,
17	directly in front of, can be regulated. And even in
18	Frisby, the Court
19	JUSTICE ALITO: What's the difference
20	between that and picketing around the site of the
21	funeral?
22	MS. PHELPS: Proximity, Justice Alito.
23	Because the captive audience doctrine, as fleshed out in
24	those abortion picketing cases, what you were looking at
25	was is it practical for the person to avoid it without

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1 having to run a gauntlet?

2 That's why you said images observable, the 3 only objection you can have there is content. Get up 4 and close the blinds.

5 JUSTICE ALITO: So it doesn't have to do 6 with whether this is a -- what you characterize as a 7 public funeral as opposed to a private funeral? That's 8 not the distinction you are relying on any longer? 9 MS. PHELPS: Not primarily. I'm primarily

10 relying upon proximity. I do think that you could have 11 a public event where there was not an element of 12 vulnerability in the people going in. You might even 13 let them up in their grill. I don't know for sure, but 14 we don't have to worry about that.

JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Counsel, I'm following your argument that the bulk of your speech in the epic, and even the bulk of your signs, involve public speech.

18 What you have not explained to me is how 19 your speech directed at the Snyders constituted public 20 speech, or speech about a public matter, because you're 21 talking about them raising Matthew for the devil,

22 teaching him to, I think, defy the creator, to divorce 23 and to commit adultery.

At what point and how do we take personal attacks and permit those, as opposed to -- I fully

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accept you're entitled in some circumstances to speak 1 2 about any political issue you want. But what's the line between doing that and then personalizing it and 3 4 creating hardship to an individual? 5 MS. PHELPS: Right. I believe, Justice б Sotomayor, that the line is where it was in this case: 7 When the father used the occasion of the son's death to 8 put a question out in the public airwaves repeatedly. 9 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: So if we disagree that that made him a public figure, if we view him as a 10 private figure, is that enough to defeat your argument? 11 MS. PHELPS: No, Justice Sotomayor. 12 13 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: All right. So assume 14 that he's a private -- that the Matthews are private 15 figures, and you did this. 16 MS. PHELPS: Right. I think --17 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: So explain to me how you 18 are protected by the First Amendment. 19 MS. PHELPS: If, without regard to what 20 label is put on a person who steps into the public 21 discussion --22 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: You want to change my assumption. 23 24 MS. PHELPS: Okay. 25 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: We assume that he' a

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1 private figure. You have now made a public statement and directed personal comments at an individual who is a 2 3 private figure. Is that actionable? 4 MS. PHELPS: Well, I don't know, Justice 5 Sotomayor. I don't know that I can give you a б definitive answer as you've framed it. What I can tell 7 you is that I think the Court would have great difficulty making a rule of law that whether you call 8 yourself private, public, limited, whatever, you -- not 9 10 the person you're mad at over their words -- but you 11 step into the public discussion and make some public 12 statements, and then somebody wants to answer you. 13 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, so that --14 what -- what if -- did Mr. Snyder, the father, become a 15 public figure simply because his son was killed in Iraq? 16 MS. PHELPS: No, Mr. Chief Justice. I 17 don't --CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Okay. So if didn't 18 19 take out --20 MS. PHELPS: I don't allege that here. CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: If he didn't take 21 22 out the usual obituary notice, then this case should come out the other way? 23 24 MS. PHELPS: It's not the obituary notice, 25 Mr. Chief Justice, he went far beyond that.

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1 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: All right. Well, let's just say he does nothing. He does nothing other 2 3 than bury his son. 4 MS. PHELPS: Right. 5 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: He is then not a б public figure? 7 MS. PHELPS: If he does nothing, we don't picket him. And I don't know for sure --8 9 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, that's because if he does nothing and it's not publicized, you don't 10 get the maximum publicity that your clients are looking 11 for. My question is, if he simply buries his son, is he 12 13 a public figure open to this protest or -- or not? MS. PHELPS: I don't know, in the context of 14 15 a war, if I can give a definitive answer to that. It 16 was not an issue of seeking maximum publicity; it was an 17 issue of using an existing public platform to bring a viewpoint that was not being articulated. For 2 years 18 19 this church watched --20 JUSTICE ALITO: And what if a parent is called after the -- he puts in the obituary information 21 22 and called by the local newspaper and asked for a 23 comment, and he says or she says, I'm proud of my son 24 because he died in the service of our country? Does that -- is he stepping into a public debate by doing 25

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1 that? 2 MS. PHELPS: How -- by however you call it, 3 Justice Alito, a church or anybody has the right to 4 answer that public comment; that is our position. 5 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, Ms. б Phelps. 7 MS. PHELPS: Thank you. CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Mr. Summers, you 8 have 4 minutes remaining. 9 REBUTTAL ARGUMENT OF SEAN E. SUMMERS 10 ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONER 11 MR. SUMMERS: Thank you, Mr. Chief Justice. 12 13 JUSTICE KAGAN: Mr. Summers, could I ask you 14 to go back to an answer that you gave to one of my 15 colleagues when you were last up there? You said that a 16 -- a more standard antiwar demonstration -- "get out of 17 Iraq," "war is immoral" at this funeral, same distance, same-sized signs -- that a more standard antiwar 18 19 demonstration would be protected by the First Amendment 20 from an intentional infliction of emotional distress 21 suit. 22 And I'm wondering why that is. If you think that what is -- what causes the lack of protection here 23 24 is the kind of glomming on to a private funeral, the 25 exploitation of a private person's grief, the -- the

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1 appearance for no other reason than to gain publicity at a private event -- if that's the problem, why doesn't it 2 3 also apply to a standard, you know, "get out of Iraq," 4 "war is wrong" kind of demonstration? 5 MR. SUMMERS: Justice Kagan, I say that is б a -- one, it's a much closer call, and, two, I would 7 look to the facts of the case to see if the funeral 8 itself was disrupted. 9 But that isn't the facts of our case. The facts of our case was, one, that it was disrupted, and, 10 two, that it's personal, targeted assaults on Mr. 11 12 Snyder. 13 JUSTICE KAGAN: Well, suppose it's not 14 disrupted and suppose -- and I know that this is -- that 15 you contest these facts -- that yours wasn't disrupted, 16 that they stopped when you started, that they were a 17 sufficient number of feet away from the funeral and so forth. 18 19 So we're just talking the fact that there 20 are people who have -- who are appropriating and taking advantage of a private funeral in order to express their 21 22 views, and they are in compliance with all the 23 content-neutral rules. 24 MR. SUMMERS: I'd say that's a much closer call and not the --25

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1 JUSTICE KAGAN: But why is it a closer call? MR. SUMMERS: It's a closer call because 2 3 it's not the personal, targeted nature of the attack on 4 the Snyder family that we have in this case. 5 JUSTICE KAGAN: So does that mean that now б we have to start reading each sign and saying "war is 7 wrong" falls on one side of the line, but "you are a war 8 criminal" falls on another side of the line? Is that 9 what we would have to do? 10 MR. SUMMERS: I think that, generally speaking, yes, Justice Kagan. The court -- the district 11 court would have to look at the signs, as the district 12 13 court did in this case, and determine which one he 14 believed were directed at the family and which ones were not. There was a comment earlier that all the signs 15 16 were presented. Well, all the signs were presented by 17 the Respondents, not by Mr. Snyder. So we --JUSTICE SCALIA: I quess that that kind of a 18 19 call is always necessary under -- under the tort that 20 you're -- that you're relying upon. The conduct has to be outrageous, right? 21 22 MR. SUMMERS: Correct. And that --23 JUSTICE SCALIA: That always requires that kind of a call, unless the tort is unconstitutional, as 24 applied to all -- all harm inflicted by words. 25

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1	MR. SUMMERS: Correct, Justice Scalia, the
2	element of intentional infliction of emotional distress
3	requires outrageousness.
4	JUSTICE KAGAN: Well, that's true, but I was
5	assuming a situation in which the a jury found that
б	the "war is wrong" that a jury did find that
7	outrageous, and the question was: Were we going to
8	reverse the jury verdict because we the First
9	Amendment prohibited it?
10	MR. SUMMERS: Again, I believe that's a
11	closer call, and I would say yes, if it's a general
12	statement, does not disrupt the funeral, does not target
13	the family. I'd say that it's one a much closer
14	call, and, yes, it's more likely that the Constitution
15	is going to prevent that claim from going forward.
16	The I see that I'm out of time.
17	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you,
18	Mr. Summers.
19	The case is submitted.
20	(Whereupon, at 11:03 a.m., the case in the
21	above-entitled matter was submitted.)
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