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# Speaker accused of racist ties

## Christian Coalition denies Barton's link to white supremacists

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CASPER — A Christian Coalition member on Thursday denied claims by human rights groups that a man scheduled to address the coalition's rally in Casper on Saturday is linked to white supremacists.

In a letter today to the Star-Tribune editor, Janet de Vries, coordinator of the Natrona County Grassroots Project, states that religious speaker David Barton has ties to the Christian Identity Movement. Christian Identity believers condone violence as a means to further their beliefs that white Anglo-Saxons are God's chosen people, other races are subspecies of humans and Jews are children of Satan, de Vries states.

In 1991, Barton spoke at the Rocky Mountain Bible Retreat in Colorado, staged by Christian Identity leader Pete Peters, according to the Coalition for Human Dignity in Portland, Ore. Also that year, Barton addressed an event in Oregon put on by Mike Watson, founder of

the Kingdom Covenant College, which is a Christian Identity ministry and school for young people, the Coalition for Human Dignity states.

Barton is the founder of Wall-Builders, which describes itself on its Internet Web page as "an organization dedicated to the restoration of the moral and religious values on which America was built."

Barton also is an exciting and very inspirational speaker, according to Mary Ann Burton, who's helping organize the Christian Coalition rally, which will be held at the Casper Holiday Inn. Burton, a member of the Natrona County School Board, vehemently denied that Barton is connected to white supremacists. "He's absolutely not a white supremacist of any sort at all," she said. "That is a lie."

"If he were, I wouldn't be going to see him," Burton said. "(Wyoming Superintendent of Public Instruction) Judy Catchpole wouldn't be coming to this if he was a white supremacist, and she's coming."

Catchpole couldn't be reached

for comment late Thursday. De Vries stressed that she claims Barton "has ties" to white supremacists, not that he "is" one.

"Based on the people he has associated with in the past, especially the Christian Identity Movement ... that does concern me," de Vries said. "That's not the course that I want to see our nation head to."

On the same day as the Christian Coalition rally, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) is staging its Juneteenth March at 11 a.m. Saturday from Pioneer Park to Riverside Park.

De Vries encouraged people who want to show their support for racial and ethnic harmony to attend the march.

The Christian Coalition states that during the Saturday rally, Barton will inform and enlighten listeners of the course to follow to restore the United States to its former greatness.

Barton said Barton focuses on educating his audiences about the truth of American history, the nation's foundations and how to correct the moral

problems Burton says the country now faces.

The Christian Coalition does not adhere to any racist beliefs, she said. "It's what's in their heart that matters."

Barton said Barton should not be judged on the basis of whom he has spoken with at past events. "I can't control who comes to school board meetings, but that doesn't mean I subscribe to everything that everyone there subscribes to," she said.

She said that she also can't prevent racists from attending the Saturday rally. "I can't control it if a white supremacist wants to come and buy a ticket," she said. "They might learn something."

Thursday was the last day to reserve tickets for the Christian Coalition rally, according to a newspaper advertisement.

Barton said Barton's talk will include visual aids, and he cites references to back up his points about the nation's foundations. Those who listen to Barton speak on Saturday "will be inspired, they will learn and they will enjoy it," she said.