

## Reason for the Season

Written by By Raynard Jackson, NNPA Columnist  
Friday, 07 December 2012 00:05

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With the Christmas season in full bloom, I am amazed how such a simple celebration has now become so controversial. How can people find a way to criticize the meaning of Christmas that I grew up with? Christmas has always meant recognizing the birth of the baby Jesus, giving one's family their time and presence, not presents.

Having Christmas without Christ is like having basketball without the basket, like having Sunday school without Sunday, like having hamburger without meat. In other words, the very name describes the essence of the event or item.

So, this time of year has become one of the most controversial times in our country, even more than our presidential elections. Secular liberals want no mention of Christ in the public square; non-Christians demand equal access to public space for their demonstrations; and atheists want nothing that remotely hints of the existence of a God. By the way, why do atheists spend so much time arguing about something that they claim doesn't exist?

The underlying issue that this time of the year brings up is: How does America manage its diversity? When I grew up, you would be run out of town if you tried to take the Christ out of Christmas. A retail store would have never thought about using the phrase "Happy Holidays" instead of "Merry Christmas."

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Now, America is so diverse. We have Muslims, atheists, Agnostics, Secularists, Hindus, Buddhists, among others. Everyone is quick to assert what their rights, are in the public square— and that's where the controversy begins.

These other groups have a right to celebrate their religions and holidays any way they chose. However, the issue becomes more problematic when everyone is arguing that their view should be given the same status as Christmas. I am leaving all legal arguments out of this discussion so as to not cloud my point.

In Washington, D.C., some Muslims are upset that their school systems are closed during Christmas, but open during their Muslim holidays. Their argument is why should they have to take a day off from work for Christmas when they don't celebrate that holiday? Should the school system be open so they can work and only Muslim students attend class? Of course not! Sometimes you simply have to accommodate the majority for practical reasons.

I offer another example. A Jewish student wants to join a fraternity and according to their bylaws, all pledges must cook a midnight meal on the Friday of their pledge week for the leaders of the fraternity. This would be in direct conflict with the Jewish student's religion that he cannot do anything from Friday evening until Saturday morning. Should that disqualify him from being able to join the fraternity? If so, is it discriminatory? If not, is it fair to the other pledges who followed all the rules for joining?

My point is that these issues are not always black and white. I grew up celebrating a Christ-centered Christmas and I am not willing to give it up simply to make others feel good. I will not allow these same people to force me to give up my beliefs to prove to them that I am not against theirs.

Why should a Muslim woman be allowed to refuse me service at the grocery store because I have pork in my basket? Why should one atheist be allowed to prevent an opening prayer at a school graduation? Why should a Muslim taxi driver be allowed to refuse me a ride because I have a bottle of wine with me?

We are a Christian nation founded upon Christian principles. Why should I have to deny my beliefs in order for you to have yours?

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