

Phot-O-pinion

Do you think that the holidays are too commercialized?



Eric Buksa '06
Yes, because a few months before Christmas there is already Christmas items on sale.

Ashley Equele '08
No, because it advertises happiness and joy, which is exactly what we need to keep our minds off the crazy things that are going on in the world today.



Brittany Benning '08
Yes, because most of the lights that are put up are for decoration, not to show the true meaning of Christmas.

True holiday focus forgotten

CAITLIN HAMILTON
STAFF WRITER

The holidays are a time for family, friends, and religion. There are many different religious holidays celebrated during the month of December such as Christmas, Hanukah, and Kwanzaa. All these different holidays are supposed to bring celebrators back to their religious roots, and become more aware of the deeper religious meanings. This is what is supposed to happen, of course, but at this day and time, all holidays have become too commercialized and have lost their true meanings. To get back to the true meaning of the holiday season, people need to understand what they are really about. Holidays are not about having the most expensive gifts or being the most festive house on the block, they are about giving back to the community, sharing good times with family and friends, and understanding the true meaning of the holidays.

While trying to boost the economy, merchandise stores are giving it their all to try to sell buyers their latest products. Americans are pressured into buying what is new and hot right now. This is not what the holidays are all about. They are not about spending more money than the next person. They are about appreciating what a person has around them and why they are celebrating the holiday. Americans need to understand why they are celebrating so many holidays, not just celebrate them for the gifts. Most stores try to get their consumers to buy their products way before the holiday season arrives. While this seems practical for the stores, it is unfair for the buyers.

It is obvious that the holidays have arrived even before Thanksgiving. At the Sears Department Store they put up decorations around October, this is way too early. "People have time to get ready for the holidays and beat the holiday rush," said Sears representative John Rogers. Companies assuming this are unfair for the true followers of the holidays. Also the television commercials are decked out in holiday festivity and the stores have their Christmas decorations up and ready. Having all of this out even

before Thanksgiving is far too early. If the stores are going to put up decorations and commercials themed to the holidays they should at least give shoppers the time to prepare. It is a lot to take in at one time, especially if the season is another month away. With the commercialization of the winter holiday's people have lost sight of what they are all about. This needs to stop because if people lose sight of what the holidays are, then the holidays have lost their true meaning. The true meaning of every holiday means different things for different people, but even with all of the differences they celebrate the same meaning. May it be Christmas or Hanukah or even Kwanza the background of it all is the same. Companies try and get rid of what that meaning may be but the celebrators should not become too caught up in the hype.

"We have the decorations out so early because we think it helps sales," said Rogers. Even though the companies may think the consumers want time to shop, most do not. To simplify an over-commercialized holiday is easy. All that is needed is faith of whatever holiday that is celebrated. When celebrating Christmas for example, do not just concentrate on the gift giving, that is not what it is about. Spend more time with family and friends to escape the crazy world of department stores. Kids, and adults love the holiday because of the toys and gifts so do not scrimp on the gifts, but also do not get involved in the craziness of commercials. Many people get too consumed in what does not count, the commercials do not help either, but the people need to be above it all and understand the true meaning.

The holiday season is here, and the commercials are too. To get back to religious roots, like holidays are intended to be, people need to not be consumed by the gimmicks of the holidays. To really understand the true meanings of any holiday the followers should not stress about the frivolities, and really concentrate on the true meanings with family and friends. People need to get back to the true roots of the season; it would be easy if everyone stopped caring more about what was not important, and really concentrated on the true meanings of the season: the family, the traditions and the religious background for each holiday. That is what counts and that is what matters.

Politics take over holiday cheer, stores now refusing to use specific greetings

JULIE CARLISLE
STAFF WRITER

As many consumers shop for their holiday gifts, they pass stores that are decorated for the holidays. However, in recent years, it has become very rare for shoppers to hear or see the expressions "Merry Christmas", "Happy Hanukah", or "Happy Kwanza" in stores because many stores have chosen to stop making signs that say specific holiday greetings and forbid employees to say them to costumers. This is all in an attempt to make the holiday season open to people of all religions and beliefs, instead of only appealing to certain people. While it is respectable that companies want to make sure that none of their customers are offended, their attempts to take the religion out of their advertising are unnecessary and are being taken too far.

Some companies have gone to extreme measures in an attempt to rid their stores of direct references to certain holidays. Many stores prohibit any words that refer to any religious aspect of Christmas, including the word "Christmas" itself, and some stores have even prohibited bell ringers that collect money for the Salvation Army because of their connection to Christmas, according to *renewamerica.com*. Companies are taking their attempts to rid their stores of any religious references too far because they are going out of their way to neutralize the holidays when very few people were actually offended by religious references in the first place.

According to *mediamatters.org*, Fox News anchor John Gibson published a book this year titled *The War on Christmas* in which he states that religion is being taken out of the holidays because of a political group that aims to get Christianity, Judaism, and spirituality out of society. While his views on the subject may be extreme, he points out many changes that few people know about: in Illinois state government workers cannot say "Merry Christmas" at work, companies, such as KB Toys and FAO Schwarz, prohibit the phrase Merry Christmas in their advertising, and in some states, including Arizona, students are not allowed to

make any reference to Christmas in class projects. Gibson and another Fox News anchor Bill O'Reilly are together attempting to expose companies that forbid religious references in the hope that people will choose not to shop in their stores. While their opinions are definitely biased, their research points out many of the changes that have occurred in society concerning the holidays.

Another example of the conflict concerning religion in stores is the controversy as to whether or not shopping centers allow Santa Claus to appear in their mall during the holiday season. Locally, Orland Square Mall and Lincoln mall still feature Santa Claus during the holidays. Oakbrook, however, does not. "Oakbrook does not have a Santa this year, and did not have one last year. I do not think it is for any particular reason. Some stores, such as Marshall Fields and Nordstrom, have events that feature Santa Claus," said an Oakbrook security guard. The fact that Oakbrook Mall no longer hosts Santa Claus during the holidays shows that the elimination of religion from the holiday season is a local problem as well as a national problem, and that something needs to be done.

The attempts of many companies to eliminate religion from their stores in order to ensure that no one will be offended have backfired because they have offended many people. Stores should continue saying holiday greetings such as "Merry Christmas", "Happy Hanukah", and "Happy Kwanza", but should also say "Happy Holidays" so that no one is offended.

In the mean time, protestors such as Gibson and O'Reilly and the Committee to Save Merry Christmas, a group of people devoted to putting religion back in the holidays, will continue pushing for stores to recognize particular holidays. "It is the height of hypocrisy for a corporation to make tens of millions of dollars selling Christmas presents, yet coldly refuse to acknowledge Christmas," said chairman of the Committee to Save Merry Christmas, Manuel Zamorano according to *renewamerica.com*.

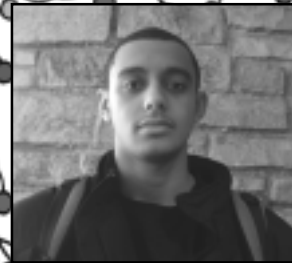
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Do you think that stores should be able to say specific holiday greetings, such as "Merry Christmas"?



Angie Coderre '08
Yes, I think stores should be able to say whatever they want because they are just trying to spread cheer for the holiday season.

Andre Walker Jr. '06
No, I think that stores should just say Happy Holidays to avoid any religious controversy.



Brian Adams '07
Yes, I think that stores should be able to say whatever they want because of freedom of speech. Any loss of business is their fault.