

## OUR VIEW Keep It Real

No one can definitely say when we lost Christmas. By losing Christmas, we mean losing its essence, the focal point of which was celebrating the birth of the Christian savior, Jesus Christ. Commercialism has taken over Christmas so thoroughly that the "reason for the season" is now shopping—not what the boy born in a manger in Jerusalem did for and meant to the world.

Whoever coined the term "holiday shopping season" was certainly prescient. Some retailers' livelihoods depend on sales during the 30-plus days between Thanksgiving and New Years. A National Retail Federation survey found that the average American consumer plans to spend more than \$738 for this holiday season, a 5.1 percent increase year over year. The survey noted that most of the money is spent on families, \$421.30, followed by friends (\$78.99), other people (\$44.16) and co-workers (\$21.05). The remainder of the funds, according to the survey, are split between candy and food (\$87.15), decorations (\$40.86), greeting cards and stamps (\$28.22) and flowers (\$15.78). That's one expensive celebration.

Conversely, we can definitely point to birth of Kwanzaa, the African-American holiday created by Maulana Karenga in 1965 to celebrate American heritage and African roots. Kwanzaa espouses seven principles. Umoja (Unity), to strive for and maintain unity in the family, community, nation and race. Kujichagulia (Self-determination): To define ourselves, name ourselves, create for ourselves and speak for ourselves. Ujima (Collective Work and Responsibility): to build and maintain our community together and make our brother's and sister's problems our problems and to solve them together.

Ujamaa (Cooperative Economics): to build and maintain our own stores, shops and other businesses and to profit from them together. Nia (Purpose): to make our collective vocation the building and developing of our community in order to restore our people to their traditional greatness. Kuumba (Creativity): to do always as much as we can, in the way we can, in order to leave our community more beautiful and beneficial than we inherited it. Imani (Faith): to believe with all our heart in our people, our parents, our teachers, our leaders and the righteousness and victory of our struggle.

With Kwanzaa gaining an ever-larger foothold in African-American culture, we must be cautious not to fall into the same commercial/capitalist trap as Christmas has. Karenga himself addresses this on his website: "We must make a distinction here between normal Ujamaa or the cooperative economic practice of artists and vendors to provide Kwanzaa materials and the corporate world's move to penetrate and dominate the community Kwanzaa market. Operating with the primary purpose of making profits, corporate strategy consists of capitalizing on the African community's expanding practice of Kwanzaa and the accompanying expanding need for symbols and other items essential and related to the practice. To do this, these corporations will offer the standard enticements of convenience, variety, self-focus and self indulgence, ethnic imagery and other stimulants to cultivate and expand the consumer mind-set."

"Moreover," he continues, "they will camouflage their purely commercial interest in Kwanzaa by borrowing the language and symbols of the holiday itself to redefine it along commercial lines. Manipulating the language and symbols of Kwanzaa, they will seek not only to sell corporation-generated Kwanzaa items, but also to introduce a full range of corporate products as necessary for the practice of Kwanzaa. Thus, they will attempt not only to penetrate and dominate the Kwanzaa market, taking it from small-scale African-American producers and vendors, but also redefine both the meaning and focus of Kwanzaa, making it another holiday of maximum and compelling shopping if we allow it."

The key words: if we allow it. Therefore, we should not engage in secret Kwanzaa versions of the secret Santa gift exchanges in so many offices. We should, however, convince everyone that Kwanzaa's principles can be celebrated year-long, that by living Kwanzaa's values you're embodying the type of generous spirit of Christ.



## Merry Christmas vs. Happy Holidays

By Dora LaGrande  
Sentinel-Voice

We have finally gone over the top. A holiday celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ is now under fire, just so we can be politically correct, tolerant and respectful of multicultural traditions. Saying Merry Christmas at Target, J.C. Penney's, Best Buy, Lowe's, Sears, OfficeMax, and Wal-Mart is prohibited; public workers and public school students can be subjected to punishment for saying Merry Christmas; simply calling a Christmas tree a Christmas tree has recently sparked heated political and religious debates.

These stores have clearly buckled under the pressure and can be viewed from some folks' perspective as being anti-Christian, even though some of these stores say they are trying to make the holidays more personal for customers regardless of what they observe. But when you look at how some of the establishments are handling the issue, they are alienating Christians. Recently, Wal-Mart had a Kwanzaa and Hanukkah gift section, but no Christmas gift section and only put it on their website apparently after receiving several complaints.

Phrases such as Happy Holidays and Seasons Greetings have replaced Merry Christmas at many public venues as municipalities and retailers try to avoid offending non-Christians. But Christians and traditionalists



### ON THE RECORD

By Dora LaGrande

argue against de-emphasizing Christ in seasonal celebrations because it diminishes the religious nature of the holiday. Simply stated, there is no holiday without the celebration of the birth of Christ and while they are so concerned about offending non-Christians they don't seem to give a damn about offending Christians.

Also, why is it that we always have to bow down, compromise and sacrifice our traditions and even our language to satisfy other factions? The heartburn with the move to remove Christmas from the season is that while these attempts to be inclusive and respectful of other traditions are noble, they appear to be yet another attempt at silencing religious expression.

Political correctness has gone way off of the deep end. The next thing you know, they will be expecting the Jewish people to call their menorah candles holiday candles. According to the television show "O'Reilly Report" on December 19, only 3 percent of Americans want to change the terminology used during the Christmas season, and 96 percent believe it should remain Merry Christmas. If this is so

true, then why all of the debate? Why does 3 percent of the population get to send us into such a tailspin? And why are we even arguing the issue? The debate has escalated into one over religious freedom vs. the constitutionality of separation of Church and State — which is really a non-debate that I addressed earlier this year.

The fact of the matter is that America has taken Christ out of Christmas a long time ago. They have made it a commercial holiday with all of the gift buying. "Good Morning America" reported that on the largest shopping day of the year, the day after Thanksgiving, retailers took in \$45 million. That's one day. The gifts, the fruitcake, the wrapping paper — none

of them really have anything to do with Christmas; they have just been made part of our tradition.

The biggest problem with taking Christ out of Christmas is that we are, once again, removing religion from a country that was built with Christ as the foundation. We have had so many tragedies this year, and we still don't get the message.

You can take Christ out of schools, out of Christmas, off the money, out of court hallways and anywhere else you want to, but this is what he has to say about it: In Matthew 10:33 He tells us, "If you deny Christ before men, He will deny you before the Father who is in Heaven."

In 2 Thessalonians 2:9-11, He tells us that if we know the truth but choose not to receive it, He will send us strong delusions, and we will believe a lie, and because we believe not the truth, we will be damned.

In Revelations 19, it says (See LaGrande, Page 11)

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