

# just out

The IN publication for the OUT population

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## COMMENTARY

# Season's pleading

When did it become unacceptable to wish someone a "Merry Christmas"?

So, do you think Sen. Trent Lott will be wishing his constituents and friends a "White Christmas" this year? Well of course not. The best he could possibly dare do is offer a watered-down "Happy Holidays." Surely no politician in his right mind would be so foolhardy as to use the word "Christmas." Good lord no. Talk about your political suicide.

Racism, that's one thing—but Christmas, whoa now. The senator would have to leave the Black Entertainment Television studios immediately and head straight to Lifetime Television for Women (including ultra-PC lesbians) for his next round of apologies. Yup, the Grinch finally has stolen Christmas, and we all sat around and watched it happen.

Now before you start stomping about the room in righteous indignation, let it be known that I in no way, shape or form disagree with or dishonor the concept of honoring the diversity of all peoples and all cultures. Nor do I bring to this conversation a spiritual or religious background. Nor is this a defense nor a stance for Christianity.

I myself am about as religious as your average potted plant. But I am also a person with memories of a childhood and of happy Christmases past. I am a person who was a child with grandparents who I loved, grandparents who made the season a happy, special and exciting time.

I am now an adult who does not want to lose the feelings of these special memories that Christmas brings back each year. Memories of trees and presents and food we saw only once a year. And now I feel threatened by this far-too-radical concept that the maintenance of cultural, racial and even economic diversity means setting aside our own beliefs and traditions.

Why does there have to be a tradeoff for those who, Christian or not, would still like to honor the memories and traditions of our own country and our culture—all mere 200-plus years of it? And beyond that, what legacy are we leaving for those who come behind us? Plastic holiday trees and sterile phrases. How sad.

In the past few weeks columnists across the United States and

here in Portland have made the sterilization of Christmas a popular topic. An often-used comparison asks why the Christmas tree has become a "holiday tree" while our Jewish friends and neighbors still light their menorah, not their "festive holiday candleholder."

Yes, Jewish culture is rooted in thousands and thousands of years of history, pain, tears, persecution and oppression. The Christmas tree isn't. But it has been with us through the infancy of our own country and our toddler growing pains and, yes, we've had our shares of hard times, sad times and agonies, too.

If we willingly and easily cast aside, or allow others to take from us, our traditions, how will we ever survive it to the point where we, too, are a nation with a history rooted in our beliefs? From where do we derive our strengths and our unity?

*I myself am about as religious as your average potted plant. But I am also a person with memories of a childhood and of happy Christmases past.*

I find an interesting parallel between the concept of our Christmas traditions threatening the sensitivities and strengths of other cultures and those dedicated and righteous U.S. citizens who sponsor "defense of marriage" legislation. To my way of thinking, gay marriage is about as threatening to the beloved and cherished heterosexual-sanctioned marriage rites as the Christmas tree is threatening to those who celebrate Kwanzaa, Hanukkah, winter solstice, Ramadan and everything else.

Perhaps the reality is that memories and traditions most threaten those who choose to celebrate nothing

at all. Perhaps in the colorlessness of their own lives they resent those who choose to honor what they have rejected.

I also believe most gay couples who desire the legal and civil benefits of marriage have no agenda or desire to deny or alter marriage for others. So why does having a Christmas tree at Pioneer Courthouse Square deny others their ability and right to celebrate and enjoy their own customs?

Celebrate in your own fashion. Do what makes you happy. Share, grow, believe or disbelieve. Honor the diversity of all; cherish the memories of the past. ☐

# Happy Holidays

from all of us at *Just Out*



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