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M**** C***** , if you know what I mean

By Kathleen Parker

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Let me begin by saying, "Merry Christmas." And, by the way, "Merry Christmas." Oh, and did I mention, "Merry Christmas"?

Let's just say the "Merry Christmas" backlash has officially begun. After years of politically correct "Happy Holidays," and the annual assault on all things Christian in the public square, many Americans are declining to turn the other cheek.

The MC backlash isn't only for, by or about Christians. It is a quintessentially American revolt against absurdity, the inevitable result of narcissistic, nihilist ninnies pushing too far.

By now the list of complaints against Christmas and Christian symbols is familiar, from prohibitions against nativity scenes on public property to the banning of Christmas carols in public schools. The nation's Capitol doesn't even have a Christmas tree anymore; it's a "holiday tree."

Of course, certain religious expressions are fine. If a tribe of Aqualishes wants to boil rhino horns in frog saliva on the National Mall to honor their deity, we'd have a commemorative postage stamp ready by next December. But let a Christian mention the baby Jesus to a kindergarten class and the ACLU wants an exorcism.

"Merry Christmas" means different things to different people, obviously. To devout Christians, the greeting conveys a profound spiritual connection to the seminal event in Western civilization. To non-Christians, the words at worst evoke a season of music, decorations, shopping and gift giving; at best, they bespeak a vacation day.

Absent religious content, Merry Christmas otherwise is a universal expression of our best stuff: charity, forgiveness, generosity and hope. What's to complain about?

Oh, you know, people acting goofy under mistletoe, those interminable Christmas carols. All those beautiful tacky trees and fat Santas. Salvation Army bell ringers collecting coins for the poor. Reindeer, snowmen, elves, nutcrackers, wreaths, colored lights, parades, happy children, parties. A regular nightmare if you're an Ebenezer.

Like perennially adolescent adults who rob teens of their right to rebellion, the anti-Christmas brigands have even taken the fun out of "Bah, humbug!" Who wants to be a curmudgeon when everybody's a Scrooge?

Clearly not Jews, an increasing number of whom are leading the charge to defend Christmas. In the

past few days, two prominent Jewish commentators - [Jeff Jacoby](#) and [Dennis Prager](#) - have written columns defending the traditions and spirit of Christmas.

Jacoby, a columnist for the Boston Globe, wrote that he finds the sights and sounds of Christmas reassuring: "They reaffirm the importance of the Judeo-Christian culture that has made America so exceptional - and such a safe and tolerant haven for a religious minority like mine."

Excuse me while I mumble, "Amen."

In a piece now circulating on the Internet, Irwin N. Graulich, a Jewish ethicist and child of Holocaust survivors, wrote for the Web site Israel Insider that public creches are beautiful sights that mean "people have gone to the trouble of sharing lovely visuals with all of America, expressing the beauty of their heritage and its spiritual message to humanity."

If not for the marketing of Christian holidays, Graulich wrote, "Chanukah would probably have gone the way of Shavuot, a more significant Jewish holiday which few Jews celebrate because there is no popular Christian holiday surrounding it."

This spirit of mutual respect and generosity is also finding expression among Muslims. Waleed Aly, a lawyer in Melbourne, Australia, and member of the Islamic Council of Victoria, has written that he is more offended by efforts to restrain religious expression than he is by nativity scenes.

"This is where political correctness loses the plot," he wrote. "What purports to inspire tolerance instead inspires hostility and intolerance. ... Denying the Christianity in Christmas or, worse, doing away with it altogether helps no one. This is not multiculturalism. It is anti-culturalism."

Perhaps this yuletide backlash helps explain why I've been hearing "Merry Christmas" more in the past two weeks than I have the past 10 years. Suddenly everybody's saying it, and yes, I'm a perp.

In Washington earlier this month, I made a point of saying "Merry Christmas" to everyone, including cab drivers who were more often than not Muslim or Hindu. Without exception, they swiveled around, smiled and said, "Merry Christmas to you, too!"

Maybe it was just sugarplums doing the rumba in my head, but I could swear I detected appreciation and relief in these exchanges. Appreciation for the freedom that permits such expression and relief that somebody said it without apology.

Christmas may not be for everyone, but the spirit of Christmas is a non-discriminating, equal-opportunity messenger of goodwill. So Merry Christmas, everybody, and don't smile.

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