



Bah Humbug: The Police State Wants Us to Be a Nation of Snowflakes

This boy is Ignorance. This girl is Want. Beware them both, and all of their degree, but most of all beware this boy, for on his brow I see that written which is Doom, unless the writing be erased.—Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol*



John Whitehead

What a year.

It feels as if government Grinches and corporate Scrooges have been working overtime to drain every last drop of joy, kindness and liberty from the world.

After endless months of being mired in political gloom and doom, we could all use a little Christmas cheer right now.

Unfortunately, Christmas has become embattled in recent years, co-opted by rampant commercialism, straight-jacketed by political correctness, and denuded of so much of its loveliness, holiness and mystery.

Indeed, the season for giving has turned into the season for getting...and for getting offended.

To a nation of [snowflakes](#), Christmas has become yet another trigger word.

When I was a child in the 1950s, the magic of Christmas was promoted in the schools. We sang Christmas carols in the classroom. There were cutouts of the Nativity scene on the bulletin board, along with the smiling, chubby face of Santa and Rudolph. We were all acutely aware that Christmas was magic.

Fast-forward to the present day, and Christmas has become fodder for the politically correct culture wars.

Over the years, Christmas casualties in the campaign to create one large national safe space have ranged from the [beloved animated classic *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer*](#) (denounced for promoting bullying and homophobia) to [the Oscar-winning tune “Baby, It’s Cold Outside”](#) (accused of being a date-rape anthem) crooned by everyone from Dean Martin to Will Ferrell and Zooey Deschanel in the movie *Elf*.

Also on the [endangered species Christmas list](#) are such songs as “Deck the Halls,” “Santa Baby,” and “White Christmas.”

One publishing company even re-issued their own redacted version of Clement Clarke Moore’s famous poem “’Twas the night before Christmas” in order to be more health conscious: the [company edited out Moore’s mention of Santa smoking a pipe](#) (“The stump of a pipe he held tight in his teeth, / And the



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smoke, it encircled his head like a wreath.”)

In the politically correct quest to avoid causing offense, Christmas keeps getting axed.

Examples abound.

Schools across the country now avoid anything that alludes to the true meaning of Christmas, such as angels, the baby Jesus, stables and shepherds.

In many of the nation’s schools, Christmas carols, Christmas trees, wreaths and candy canes have also been banned as part of the effort to avoid any reference to Christmas, Christ or God. One school even outlawed the colors red and green, saying they were Christmas colors and, thus, illegal.

Students asked to send seasonal cards to military troops have been told to make them “holiday cards” and instructed not to use the words “Merry Christmas” on their cards.

Many schools have redubbed their Christmas concerts as “winter holiday programs” and refer to Christmas as a “winter festival.” Some schools have cancelled holiday celebrations altogether to avoid offending those who do not celebrate the various holidays.

In Minnesota, a charter school [banned the display of a poster prepared to promote the school’s yearbook as a holiday gift because the poster included Jack Skellington from Tim Burton’s *The Nightmare Before Christmas*](#) and other secular Christmas icons, not to mention the word “Christmas.”

In New Jersey, one school district [banned traditional Christmas songs](#) such as “Joy to the World” and “Silent Night” from its holiday concerts. A New Jersey middle school cancelled a field trip to attend a performance of a play based on Charles Dickens’s “A Christmas Carol” because some might have found it “offensive.”

In Texas, a teacher who decorated her door with a scene from “A Charlie Brown Christmas,” including a scrawny tree and Linus, was forced to take it down lest students be offended or feel uncomfortable.

In Connecticut, teachers were instructed to change the wording of the classic poem “’Twas the Night Before Christmas” to “’Twas the Night Before a Holiday.”

In Virginia, a high school principal debated about whether he could mention Santa or distribute candy canes, given that they were symbols of Christmas.

In Massachusetts, a fourth-grade class was asked to list 25 things that reminded them of Christmas. When one young student asked if she could include “Jesus,” her teacher replied that she could get fired if Christmas’ namesake appeared on the list.

Things have not been much better outside the schools, muddled by those who subscribe to the misguided notion that the Constitution requires that anything religious in nature be banned from public places.

In one West Virginia town, although the manger scene (one of 350 light exhibits in the town’s annual Festival of Lights) included shepherds, camels and a guiding star, the main attractions—Jesus, Mary and Joseph—were nowhere to be found due to concerns about the separation of church and state.

In Chicago, organizers of a German Christkindlmarket were informed that the public Christmas festival was no place for the Christmas story. Officials were concerned that clips of the film “The Nativity Story,” which were to be played at the festival, might cause offense.

In Delaware, a Girl Scout troop was prohibited from carrying signs reading “Merry Christmas” in their



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town's annual holiday parade.

Clearly, Christmas has become one of many casualties in the misguided dispute over the so-called "separation of church and state," a controversy that has given rise to a disconcerting and unconstitutional attempt to sanitize public places of any reference to God or religion.

Yet there's a really simple solution to this annual angst of whether students and teachers can display Christmas-related posters, wear Christmas colors of red and green or sing Christmas songs, and that is for government officials to stop being such Humbugs and create a vibrant, open environment where all expression can flourish.

While the First Amendment prohibits the government from forcing religion on people or endorsing one particular religion over another, there is no legitimate legal reason why people should not be able to celebrate the season freely or wish each other a Merry Christmas or even mention the word Christmas.

After all, the First Amendment affirms the right to freedom *for* religion, not freedom *from* religion.

Hoping to clear up the legal misunderstanding over the do's and don'ts of celebrating Christmas, The Rutherford Institute's Constitutional Q&A on "[Twelve Rules of Christmas](#)" provides basic guidelines for lawfully celebrating Christmas in schools, workplaces and elsewhere.

Yet while Christmas may be the "trigger" for purging Christmas from public places, government forums and speech—except when it profits Corporate America—it is part and parcel of the greater trend in recent years to whittle away at free speech and trample the First Amendment underfoot.

Anything that might raise the specter of controversy is avoided at all costs.

We are witnessing the emergence of an unstated yet court-sanctioned right, one that makes no appearance in the Constitution and yet seems to trump the First Amendment at every turn: the right to not be offended.

In this way, emboldened by phrases such as "hate crimes," "bullying," "extremism" and "microaggressions," free speech has been confined to carefully constructed "free speech zones," criminalized when it skates too close to challenging the status quo, shamed when it butts up against politically correct ideals, and muzzled when it appears dangerous.

At the slightest hint of trouble, government officials (and corporations) are inclined to chuck anything that might be objectionable.

Yet when all is said and done, what the police state *really* wants is a nation of snowflakes, snitches and book burners: a legalistic, intolerant, elitist, squealing bystander nation willing to turn on each other and turn each other in for the slightest offense, while being incapable of presenting a united front against the threats posed by the government and its cabal of Constitution-destroying agencies and corporate partners.

You want to know why this country is in the state it's in?

The answer is the same no matter what the problem might be, whether it's the economy, government corruption, police brutality, endless wars, censorship, falling literacy rates, etc.: every one of these problems can be sourced back to the fact that "we the people" have stopped thinking for ourselves and relinquished responsibility for our lives and well-being to a government entity that sees us only as useful idiots.

The Greek philosopher Socrates believed in teaching people to think for themselves and in the free



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exchange of ideas. For his efforts, he was accused of corrupting the youth and was put to death. However, his legacy lived on in the Socratic method of teaching: posing questions that help young and old discover the answers by learning to think for themselves.

Now even the ability to think for oneself is in danger of extinction.

As Rod Serling, creator of the classic sci-fi series *Twilight Zone* and one of the most insightful commentators on human nature, once observed, “We’re developing a new citizenry. One that will be very selective about cereals and automobiles, but won’t be able to think.”

We face an immense threat in our society from this drive to obliterate our history and traditions in order to erect a saccharine view of reality. In the process, we are creating a schizophrenic world for our children to grow up in, and it is neither healthy nor will it produce the kind of people who will be able to face the challenges of a future ruled by a totalitarian regime.

As I make clear in my book [Battlefield America: The War on the American People](#) and in its fictional counterpart [The Erik Blair Diaries](#), you can’t sanitize reality. You can’t scrub out of existence every unpleasant thought or idea. You can’t legislate tolerance. You can’t create enough safe spaces to avoid the ugliness that lurks in the hearts of men and women. You can’t fight ignorance with the weapons of a police state.

What you can do, however, is step up your game.

Opt for kindness over curtness, and civility over censorship. Choose peace over politics, and freedom over fascism. Find common ground with those whose politics or opinions or lifestyles may not jive with your own.

Do your part to make the world a little brighter and a little lighter, and maybe, just maybe, we’ll have a chance of digging our way out of this hole.

ABOUT JOHN & NISHA WHITEHEAD:

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