

Editorial



Public celebration subjects minorities to Christian culture

Christmas allows us to see the good in many people. Some starving Ethiopians remain alive partly because Americans have given generously to their relief.

Local drives collecting canned food, toys and cash flourish this time of year. Most of those drives meet lofty goals against stacked odds: A stagnant economy, a growing lower class, families' desires to shower their own with gifts regardless of cost.

Granted, many people give only because they feel guilty about having so much during the holidays when many others have so little. But when some good comes from guilt, it can't be entirely offensive.

It offends, though, that Christmas has become such a public holiday.

The U.S. Supreme Court recently decided that creches could be displayed on public property.

Creches wouldn't be an endorsement of any particular religion, the court said, but would be cultural symbols.

"Best buys for Christmas," "Share Christmas with others," "For your Christmas giving," scream advertisements in almost every newspaper. Department store salespersons wish you "A very merry Christmas." St. Nicholas sails across your television screen on an electric shaver. Lincoln Mayor Roland Luedtke is scheduled to give a Christmas message at the County-City Building later this month.

From this evidence, then, the United States is a Christian culture, subject to having Christian ideals thrown at its people.

In Lincoln, religions other than various Christian sects aren't very visible. The only minority groups in town are sequestered in selective neighborhoods and the UNL campus.

Yet, they are there. An article in the Daily Nebraskan Holiday Supplement (Dec. 4) described how Christmas has infringed on the Jewish holiday, Hannukah. Jewish parents feel obligated to buy lavish gifts for their children because of Christmas hype.

Hannukah, a relatively minor holiday on the Jewish religious calendar, has been forced to compete with Christmas.

Other segments of that story were edited out for reasons of space. Those passages detailed how Jews feel put upon by the public celebration of Christmas, how they feel like a tiny group, ostracized by the majority because of religious reasons.

Now, some of the country's lawmakers want to further ostracize this tiny band of Jews by implementing laws that have Christian groups as their backers: Anti-abortion laws, the practice of religion in public schools, holy wars against "godless" communism in Central America.

This ignorance of other points of view can easily lead to intolerance as the country slowly builds to a xenophobic lather over evil empires, dirty immigrants and ignorant South African tribesmen.

Jeff Browne

Daily Nebraskan Senior Editor

Dark ideas cloud feelings

Mr. Rogers, the guru of wide-eyed innocence and everything that is good and kind, always asks the children in his TV neighborhood how they are feeling. He does it before slipping into his cardigan sweater; he does it before singing his familiar theme song, "Won't you be my neighbor?" Feelings are important to Mr. Rogers.

But at the same time I grow tired of the barrage of statistics, ballistics, gruesome scenarios, catastrophic predictions and the holier-than-thou preachiness of both sides. No one has a lock on truth, just as no one but me can feel my feelings.

It's 10:15 a.m., now, Wednesday morning. The civil defense warning sirens just sounded. I'm crying now. My imagination is too good. I cry a slow, single tear for all the people and things that I'd miss. For all the people I'd never get to meet. It's not as frightening as it is pitifully and overwhelmingly sad.

I'd miss my wife, Susan. I love her and couldn't bear to be without her. I wonder what it would be like without her to talk to? Without her to love, after a nuclear war? I wonder about such things.

My thoughts turn also to my parents and my sister, and to Susan's parents. Will they know how much I love them if I never get to see them again? Will I ever see them again? I think about such things.

I think about my childhood playgrounds and special hiding places — the path I used to take home from grade school and the creek I learned to skip stones in. Will it be taken from me? Maybe I should go back to Pennsylvania and see it one more time?

I think about my dumb ole stuffed dog with one eye that my mother still keeps in a cardboard box in her basement. I love that dog, Ruff, that's his name. What will happen to Ruff? I used to wipe my tears on his soft fur and clutch him close to me when I was sad. He loved me when nobody else would. He never had anybody but me to love him. He never hurt anybody. What would happen to Ruff would happen to me. I worry about things like this. Silly things. Personal things.

Days will pass, and I will intellectualize again and continue to propose solutions. But it won't change the way I feel inside. It won't change the soft-sculptured feelings and emotions that are mind alone, to feel in the privacy of my own heart.

As Mr. Rogers might say, How are you feeling today? Each of you, of course, have your own feelings, and I leave you to them.



James A. Fussell

Too many times, as a columnist, I tell you what I'm thinking. I gauge my relative success or failure by whether I'm able to evoke a tear, a laugh or a thought. Today, I'm trading in my ivory tower for a glass-bottomed boat. I don't care if I evoke anything. I want to tell you how I'm feeling.

I am like you. I laugh, I'm happy that Christmas is here. I have wonderful friends and people whom I love.

I am like you. I feel sad from time to time. I feel confused. Confused about global problems that I didn't create; problems that seem too enormous to fix and too personal to ignore. The all-too-real possibility of a nuclear war, complete with the ending of everything and everyone I've ever cared about, saddens me.

I have opinions that may differ from yours. I'm afraid of a system where you can't even make one mistake. But, inside, I'm like you, and you, and you. I don't know what to do about nuclear weapons, and I'm far from comfortable with my own responses. I don't have any simple answers. Just feelings.

I feel mad, but I don't know who to hate; I feel provoked, but I don't know who to fight. I feel a faceless, nameless threat hanging there — somewhere — ready to drop. I feel sad for us all.

Like Martin Luther King, I have a dream. This isn't it. I feel so selfish. Why does this have to be my problem? I don't want it anymore. It's uncomfortable and I want it to go away.

I know that ignoring a problem won't make it go away.



Letters

Reader mourns 'less famous' kids

This is just a few lines to express my appreciation to Judi Nygren's article "Star's dreams die" (Daily Nebraskan, Nov. 28). You see, I grew up on those streets of Chicago and I know what it is to lose friends to the mighty handgun. Thank you for putting into words something that I have felt and thought, but could not.

Thank you on behalf of Gould, LeRoy, Eric, Elroy — a few of the less famous kids.

Chuck Trimin
Lincoln

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Other staff members will write editorials throughout the semester. They will carry the author's name after the final sentence.

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