

CHRISTMAS, LET IT BE

Jackie Mason and Raoul Felder

Editor's note: Jackie Mason, the comedian, and Raoul Felder, the noted New York attorney, had the courage to directly confront those who have joined the culture war against Christmas. They are both founding members of Don Feder's group, Jews Against Anti-Christian Defamation (JAACD). Having people of this quality in the Jewish community stand up for Christians is enormously helpful. We are indebted to them for all their good work, and their bountiful goodwill.

You would have to be a refugee from a sanitarium not to look forward to Christmas. Christmas in America is not a clash of civilizations, but rather a celebration of diversities. But to lots of people, it doesn't seem that way. Across America school districts are forbidding the singing of Christmas carols, nativity scenes are being banned in public places, and in malls the "Christmas sales" are now "Holiday sales." Although we are part of the 15 percent of Americans that are not Christian and the 5 percent who do not celebrate Christmas—unless the giving of gifts and gratuities constitute "celebrating"—and if that is true then we are part of the 95 percent who are celebrants—we have nothing against, and are part of those who enjoy the entire Christmas experience. What's not to like? People are friendlier and music fills the air.

However, we have the whisper of an unworthy thought that if polls were taken of only the givers: the bosses, the employers, the apartment dwellers and all the myriad people from whom gifts are sought on a virtually obligatory basis, as opposed to the people with their hands out, the percentages probably would tip more towards the Scrooges.

Personally we like Christmas carols—especially sung by Bing

Crosby—with their simple and elegant melodies and chord structures that have survived in the same manner as other folk songs that have been handed down through the ages, such as those of Scotland and Ireland.

We cannot see how our beliefs are jeopardized by someone else celebrating *his* beliefs—particularly if the celebrations are those consisting, at least in part, of love, family values, spirituality and giving thought to the less fortunate.

We would have a very fragile religion if 2000 years of our culture and beliefs were threatened by Bing Crosby singing “I’m Dreaming of a White Christmas”—incidentally written by a Jew, Irving Berlin—Santa Claus and mistletoe. Now, if it were the KKK celebrating their holiday by exchanging presents of bed sheets and singing carols beside burning crosses, or the Romans tossing another Jew on the Yule log, or the Ghost of Christmas Past turning out to be Osama Bin Laden in a Santa Claus suit, it would be another story. But until then, hand us the check books and turn up Bing Crosby.

Jews seem to be heavily involved in this repeal movement. They would do well to remember Pastor Niemöller’s observation: “In Germany they first came for the Communists, and I didn’t speak up because I wasn’t a Communist. Then they came for the Jews, and I didn’t speak up because I wasn’t a Jew. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I didn’t speak up because I wasn’t a trade unionist. Then they came for the Catholics, and I didn’t speak up because I was a Protestant. Then they came for me—and by that time no one was left to speak up.”

The point is, of course, if Christmas is abolished from public display, can the fate of Chanukah and the myriad of other Jewish holidays be far behind?

Also, if the Christians are discouraged from buying Christmas presents, some thought must be given to the question, “Who is selling the presents to the Christians?”

And lastly, a word about the ACLU. The ACLU is an organization supported by many liberal Jews and is in the forefront of efforts for a public suppression of Christmas. They are also vocal in criticism of American treatment of terrorists. It is our respectful observation that it is the *terrorists* who have affected the way in which we now have to live our lives, have created serious economic consequences for us and caused the death of thousands of Americans—and *not* Bing Crosby.

It is significant that the ACLU's position is that pornography is protected under the Constitution, while the Christmas tree is not. So, if this bunch were successful, the only way you could see a Christmas tree is if you visit a porn shop that had one.

With these thoughts we want to wish our friends both Merry Christmas and Happy Chanukah—at least as long as we are permitted to do so.

Coda: Proof that the work of Don Feder, Jackie Mason, Raoul Felder, Rabbi Spero et al. is having an effect was evident in Frank Rich's column in the New York Times on Christmas day. He railed against the "manufactured" Christmas wars, accusing those who are protesting the censoring of Christmas of exhibiting "a strong anti-Semitic and far-right pedigree." Rich explicitly criticized Jackie Mason, calling him "Fox News's obligatory show Jew." This is exactly what we would expect from Frank Rich.