

# SAN JOSE'S CHRISTMAS TREES UNDER FIRE

Catholic League president Bill Donohue discusses a controversy over this year's San Jose Christmas tree display:

Every year since the 1950s, San Jose has had a proud record of honoring Christmas with a grand display of Christmas trees. This year, however, a controversy has arisen over some trees.

San Jose's Plaza de Cesar Chavez is the site of approximately 500 Christmas trees, an event organized by a non-profit organization, Christmas in the Park. Last year, it drew over 650,000 visitors. In addition to the display of Christmas trees, there are many Christmas-themed events for families. Unfortunately, some have politicized the annual celebration

This year there is a tree erected by the Satanic Temple, and one that celebrates Colin Kaepernick kneeling on the field. There is also a section of the park set aside for LGBT activists: they placed a Barbie doll alongside an image of Bruce Jenner from the Olympics.

Offensive as these displays are, the origin of the problem can be traced to the event's organizers. According to the ABC affiliate, KGO, they invited schools, businesses and non-profit organizations to "bring awareness to issues or causes they care about."

While the motives may be noble, invitations to promote issues and causes that people care about ineluctably dilute the meaning of Christmas.

Would the organizers honor Black History Month by asking the public to participate in celebratory events that "bring awareness to issues or causes they care about"? Would this not ensure an attenuation of the respect due African-American

achievements? Worse, it may even beckon white supremacists to promote their agenda.

There are those who, unlike the well-meaning people of San Jose, intentionally create faux competition with Christmas so as to neuter its essence.

For example, Freedom From Religion Foundation, a militant atheist anti-Christian group from Madison, Wisconsin, released a statement saying it would provide “free secular displays to erect in public forums.”

Why? “One reason to counter religious displays on public property is to ensure your point is represented at this time of the year.” In other words, the purpose is to “counter” Christmas displays. It is not an oversight that the atheists could care less about countering Hanukkah—it’s Christians they really hate.

City in the Park organizers need to get back to their roots, lest their goodwill be exploited by those with their own agenda. This event started in the 1950s with a *nativity scene* built by Don Lima in front of his family mortuary—it did not start with an invitation to promote any issue or cause that the public fancied.

There are plenty of opportunities to advance all sorts of political, economic, social, and cultural causes. They should not be held coterminously with Christmas celebrations.

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## NYC HEARING ON MONUMENTS WAS

# **DISTURBING**

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on recent public hearings held by the New York City panel authorized to assess the propriety of controversial monuments on public grounds:

On November 27, the New York City Mayoral Commission on Art, Monuments, and Markers completed its hearings; they were held in all five boroughs. I testified on Thanksgiving eve, in Manhattan. What I witnessed was disturbing.

The hearing was scheduled from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Although I signed up online to speak, I got to the assigned venue at 9:10 a.m., hoping to enhance my chances of speaking.

The guards I spoke to had no idea about any hearing on monuments, and directed me to go around the corner to another address. When I spoke to those guards, they said the hearing does not begin until 10:00 a.m. and I should wait outside. It was raining. I asked if I could stand inside, off to the side, and they said no.

Shortly before 10:00 a.m., the guards allowed those waiting outside to enter. We were directed to the second floor, where we waited in a hallway until 10:30 a.m.

Once seated, the commission's members introduced themselves. Then we heard about the purpose of the hearings. From what was said, it was apparent that most of the panel members were on the left. But all of them were fair to those who testified, showing no partiality.

We watched a short video and then, at 10:45 a.m., the first three persons selected to testify were called to the front.

Everyone was told they had three minutes to speak; a timer was set off to the side. No clapping, shouting, etc. was allowed,

but if people in the gallery liked what they heard, they could wave their hands in the air in support. There were approximately 200 people present, roughly split between those who came to testify and observers.

It was evident from the get-go that most of those who came to testify were left-wing activists. They were pros. Some made it clear that they had already testified in other boroughs. Who were they? The Occupy Wall Street and Black Lives Matter crowd.

The hatred for America was palpable. The first speaker, after condemning America in the most vile and sweeping terms, said that if the panel did not approve removing the statue of Columbus in Columbus Circle, he and his followers would forcibly take it down.

This elicited a massive wave of hands in support. The haters did not see the irony of accusing Columbus of being tyrannical while boasting of their contempt for the law. That's because they were weaned on the Howard Zinn thesis of the American founding (Zinn, who once was a member of the Communist Party, authored the most widely used radical history textbook on college campuses).

The haters broke along bimodal age lines: most were in their twenties; some were of the Sixties generation. This makes sense. Most Americans who are in their thirties, forties, and fifties have their own families. Moreover, they were raised in times of relative placidity compared to the 1960s or today. Also, it was the day before Thanksgiving, a time when most normal people spend time with their family, not with their comrades.

Among the normal people who came to testify, most were Italian. They came to defend Columbus, and they did a fine job, notwithstanding the hostile reception they received. There was one young woman—she was from the Dominican Republic

but her mother was born in Italy—who startled the audience with her strong defense of Columbus.

I got the nod to speak after the break. I am not one to tout credentials, but after listening to panel members cite their achievements—many were academicians—I mentioned mine. Unlike the other normal people who spoke, I did not address Columbus (except at the end as a sign of solidarity with the Italian Catholics who spoke). I spoke about the dark side of an American icon, Frederick Douglass.

Douglass was an ex-slave, abolitionist, and a supporter of women's rights. Unbeknownst to most, he was also an anti-Catholic bigot. He held a particular animus against Irish Catholics, blaming them, not the English, for their plight. He was in Ireland in 1845 when the English stole food from the Irish during the famine, yet he never objected.

After making my case against Douglass, I emphasized that I did not want the statue of him removed from Central Park. I explicitly condemned all attempts at cultural cleansing. The room was silent; there was no hand waving of any kind.

I sought to make two points. First, removing the monuments and statues of controversial persons is a very dangerous road to go down. Is there any public figure—or for that matter private person—who is so squeaky clean that he has nothing to regret? Not only that, but those leading the charge against revered American figures proved just how badly tainted they are.

In making my second point, I said I was “too mature” to take a harsh position against Douglass. He had done great good, I said, and the times in which he lived were different, so to indict him on the basis of his anti-Catholic side (the Church was “Satan” he said), was not entirely fair.

If these hearings prove anything, it is that most New Yorkers, like most Americans, are normal: they have better things to do (like preparing the stuffing) than listen to anti-American

propaganda over the holidays. The activists made it clear that they do not speak for most of us. Indeed, they are an angry, arrogant, and badly educated gang of haters.

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# OFFENSIVE CHRISTMAS FARE EXPLODES

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the rash of offensive Christmas fare:

It's not even December, and the Christmas haters are already out in force.

In addition to those who want to censor Christmas, such as the D.C. Metro Area Transit Agency, there are those who prefer to trash the Christian holiday by using obscene sex-themed depictions.

There is a homosexual nativity scene in Los Angeles, courtesy of comedian Cameron Esposito, that has caught the eye of many; it features two Josephs. We looked to find a homosexual depiction of the birth of Muhammad, but we came up empty.

There appears to be an explosion of homosexual Christmas fare this season. There are homosexual T-shirts, Christmas trees, ornaments, wreaths, and cards. Also available online are "Sick and Twisted Christmas Cards" and "Perverted Christmas Cards." There is a card that features a reindeer with blue testicles and one that depicts Santa performing anal sex on a bear.

The Christmas haters are not new, are not confined to the U.S., and are not the exclusive work of atheists. Five years ago a wacko Anglican church in New Zealand featured a

billboard of a homosexual baby Jesus.

One of the most offensive “holiday cards” online has nothing to do with homosexuality or obscenity. It shows a picture of Osama bin Laden with an inscription dated 12-25-01 (the first Christmas after 9/11) that says:

YOU CAN NOT STOP US  
WE HAVE THIS ANTHRAX  
YOU DIE NOW  
ARE YOU AFRAID?  
DEATH TO AMERICA  
DEATH TO ISRAEL  
ALLAH IS GREAT  
MERRY CHRISTMAS

Most Americans, whether religious or not, are good people. They want nothing to do with these kinds of offensive attacks on the meaning of Christmas. On the other side, however, there are those—and they are not a tiny minority—who are engaged in cultural cleansing, seeking to rid our society of its Judeo-Christian heritage.

Regrettably, we expect to confront many more of these kinds of anti-Christmas assaults in December. We may have a Christmas-friendly president, but the secular left still controls the command centers of the culture.

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## **SNAP CONTINUES TO LIE**

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on remarks made by the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests (SNAP):

If there is one thing that the leaders of SNAP have had in common over the years, it is their propensity to lie. Barbara Dorris, its leader by default, added to the litany of lies when she told a dissident, and sympathetic, Catholic source that SNAP did not make false allegations against Fr. Joseph Jiang, a St. Louis priest who was falsely accused of sexual abuse.

On November 27, the Archdiocese of St. Louis issued a news release titled, "SNAP Apologizes to Archdiocese and Falsely Accused Priest." The SNAP apology was extended to Fr. Jiang, St. Louis Archbishop Robert Carlson, the late Msgr. Joseph Pins, and the Archdiocese of St. Louis. It was part of a settlement with SNAP in a defamation lawsuit filed by Fr. Jiang in 2015.

In its settlement apology, SNAP said it "apologizes for any false or inaccurate statements related to the complaints against Fr. Joseph Jiang that it or its representatives made which in any way disparaged" the aforementioned principals to whom the apology was extended.

When asked about this Dorris proved to be as disingenuous as she is dishonest. "It is an apology if we made a false allegation....And right now, I'd say none of them have been proven to be false." Perhaps she needs someone to interpret the apology that her organization made.

Last year, when a federal judge hammered SNAP for defaming Fr. Jiang, the [\*St. Louis Post-Dispatch\*](#) laid out the particulars. U.S. District Court Judge Carol E. Jackson plainly said that SNAP's public statements "were false and that they did not conduct any inquiry into the truth or falsity of these public statements, but instead made these statements negligently and with reckless disregard for the truth."

As expected, the *New York Times*, which has been giving SNAP every benefit of the doubt for decades, did not run a story on



SNAP's settlement or apology.

The Catholic League has led the fight against SNAP for as long as the *New York Times* has been covering up for it. We are delighted with the outcome. SNAP continues to lose, both in court and in the court of public opinion. Meanwhile, we are stronger than ever.

We are happy that Fr. Jiang has been vindicated. We extend our congratulations to him and to his stellar boss, Archbishop Carlson.

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## **DC METRO TRANSIT CENSORS CHRISTMAS AD**

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the censoring of a Christmas ad in the District of Columbia:

To celebrate Christmas without celebrating Christ makes as much sense as celebrating Veterans Day without celebrating veterans. But don't tell that to the secular sages at the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA).

WMATA has banned a Christmas ad sponsored by the Archdiocese of Washington because it "depicts a religious scene and thus seeks to promote religion." The scene was mounted on a poster to be placed on the outside of metro buses. Its purpose is stated in its message: "Find the Perfect Gift." The scene neither mentions nor depicts Christ.

The archdiocese, represented by the distinguished law firm, Kirkland & Ellis, has sued WMATA on First Amendment grounds: freedom of speech and the free exercise of religion have both

been violated.

Would WMATA allow a bus ad of Rev. Martin Luther King, in clergy garb, speaking from a pulpit before a congregation? Would it reject the ad on the grounds that it is a religious scene and is thus promoting religion?

Would WMATA reject a vile anti-religious ad? Or would it conclude that such a poster is merely an expression of free speech?

Religious speech does not automatically lose its constitutional protections because it is voiced on public property. This is a clear case of viewpoint discrimination, something which the courts have repeatedly struck down as unconstitutional. It is also an example of militant secularism and anti-Christian bigotry.

To show how utterly ignorant the officials at WMATA are, consider that the City of New York recently approved the granting of a permit to the Catholic League to erect a life-size nativity scene in Central Park, on public property. If anything, our crèche is much more of a “religious scene” than the one sponsored by the Archdiocese of Washington, yet it has never been challenged as unconstitutional, not even by the ACLU.

Kudos to Cardinal Donald Wuerl, archbishop of the archdiocese, for standing up to the bullies at WMATA.

Contact Paul J. Wiedefeld, WMATA CEO: [PWiedefeld@wmata.com](mailto:PWiedefeld@wmata.com)

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# WAR ON MONUMENTS IS DRIVEN BY HATE

Catholic League president Bill Donohue has written an article that examines some neglected historical aspects of the controversy over monuments and statues that has gripped the nation.

It will appear in the December edition of the league's journal, *Catalyst*. To read it, click [here](#).

If you like this piece, and are not a member of the Catholic League, please consider [joining now](#). *Catalyst* is a 16-page publication that is published 10 times a year and is sent to all members.

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# FRANKEN MUST TAKE HIS OWN MEDICINE

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on Sen. Al Franken:

Yesterday, Sen. Al Franken broke his silence and did a media tour explaining away his sexual offenses. "I'm looking forward to getting back to work tomorrow," he said. He should instead take some of his own medicine and resign.

Five years ago, Franken co-sponsored a bill, the End Trafficking in Government Contracting Act, to strengthen federal legislation on human trafficking, which includes sexual exploitation. The bill, which was approved by the Senate in December 2012, was necessitated because of the

failure of the existing “zero tolerance” policy.

In July 2013, Franken co-sponsored another bill, the Military Justice Improvement Act, to deal with the “epidemic of sexual assault in the military.” It was necessitated because of the failure of the existing “zero tolerance” policy.

It was noble of Franken to support going beyond “zero tolerance” to combat sexual abuse by government contractors and subcontractors who operate overseas. Similarly, it was noble of him to support going beyond “zero tolerance” to combat sexual molestation in the armed forces.

It was ignoble of him to go back to work today. Does he think that his support for legislation combating sexual abuse should not extend to him? He has admitted to one act of sexual abuse, and is accused by three other women of violating them.

Ironically, it was the Catholic Church that first instituted a “zero tolerance” policy for abusers. And what did Franken do? [He mocked it.](#)

Now that Franken has proven that he has no integrity left, it is up to the Senate to show him the door. He is utterly shameless.

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## **DONOHUE TESTIFIES ON DOUGLASS STATUE**

To read Catholic League president Bill Donohue’s November 22 testimony before the New York City Mayoral Advisory Committee on Art, Monuments and Markers, click [here](#).

Donohue’s statement seeks a reconsideration of the work of

Frederick Douglass, the ex-slave turned abolitionist. He wants the public to learn of Douglass' anti-Catholicism, especially his animus against Irish Catholics.

Donohue emphatically does not seek, nor want, the City of New York to remove a statue of Douglass from Central Park. The Catholic League is opposed to cultural cleansing, especially when orchestrated by the government.

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## **POPE SLAMS THREE TYPES OF PERSECUTION**

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the November 22 homily given by Pope Francis:

Pope Francis has been consistent in his condemnation of what he calls "ideological colonization," or the attempt by developed nations to impose a radical cultural agenda on the poor, including those who live in less developed nations. Such efforts ignore basic human differences, rooted in nature. This agenda inexorably leads to oppression, he said, manifesting itself in religious, political, and cultural persecution.

In his homily today, the pope singled out abortion as an example. He called it a "sin" that results in "killing children." As if to prove the pope right about his concerns, California and Pennsylvania recently filed suit seeking to turn back the Trump administration's rejection of President Obama's Health and Human Services (HHS) mandate. It would force Catholic non-profits to pay for abortion-inducing drugs.

The Little Sisters of the Poor are fighting back. Yesterday, they asked federal district courts to prevent the two states

from undoing the rollback of the HHS mandate.

The pope's remarks are prescient. His love for the least among us, and his contempt for elites who seek to impose their corrupt ideas on society, should be welcomed by all Catholics, especially at Thanksgiving.

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## AMERICAN ATHEISTS SUE OVER FIDO

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on a new lawsuit brought by American Atheists:

For the past few years, an animal shelter in Teterboro, New Jersey has posted a note on Facebook saying it was hosting a blessing of animals. The blessing, performed by a Catholic priest, is a tradition in honor of Saint Francis of Assisi.

No one was required to come. But this year, for the first time, someone complained. Enter American Atheists. It was so angry that it actually went into federal district court to stop Fido from being blessed.

A lawyer for American Atheists, Geoffrey Blackwell, wrote a letter in September to the Bergen County Animal Shelter, putting officials on notice. His command of constitutional law is appalling.

Blackwell says, "The Establishment clause prohibits government agencies from enacting any law or policy 'respecting the establishment of religion.'"

The First Amendment does not speak about "respecting *the* establishment of religion." It specifically says "an"

establishment. The difference is important. Madison, who wrote the First Amendment, was asked about his wording and why he chose the pronoun “an” over the article “the.” He said the Congress could not pass a national religion nor could it favor one religion over another. He did not craft his words to mean a blanket proscription of religion in the public sector.

Just as serious is Blackwell’s strained analysis of *Lemon v. Kurtzman*, the 1971 U.S. Supreme Court decision establishing a three-prong test to decide whether the First Amendment has been violated.

He says blessing puppies violates all three prongs. The blessing, in his mind, “lacks a secular purpose,” has “the primary effect of advancing” a religious viewpoint, and “unduly entangles the government in religious practice.”

The ceremony is clearly designed as a pro-family, pro-animal, event not a religious exercise. It is also voluntary. The application of *Lemon* is absurd.

If this “unduly entangles the government in religious practice,” what are we to say about what just happened on Election Day? Voters went to the polls, located in some instances in a Catholic school or church basement, without ever triggering *Lemon*.

On the home page of American Atheists’ website it says, “We’re fighting to protect real religious freedom.” So fighting to stop Fido from being blessed in a public shelter is now seen as a *real* contribution to religious freedom.

American Atheists has certainly come a long way from the days when its scoundrel founder, Madalyn Murray O’Hair, was busy stopping Freddy from praying in school.

The day is fast approaching when American Atheists will file a lawsuit against a priest for saying “God Bless You” to a person who sneezes in a public park.