

LA Residents Fight to Save Historic Cross, Nativity From Removal

Los Angeles merchants are seeking to join a federal court battle to preserve a 97-year-old cross and longstanding Nativity display at historic Olvera Street.

Becket, a religious-liberty law firm representing the Olvera Street Merchants Association Foundation, filed a request Monday asking the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals to allow the merchants to defend the displays.

The cross has stood at the head of Olvera Street since 1929, when it was erected to commemorate Los Angeles' 148th birthday. A life-size Nativity is also displayed each December during Las Posadas, a traditional celebration rooted in Mexican-American Catholic history.

According to Fox News Digital, a resident sued the city in 2025, demanding that officials remove or cover the cross and discontinue the Nativity because the displays offend him and make him feel excluded as a nonbeliever.

"If the cross and nativity were taken down, it would just be the first step in unraveling the vibrant community cultural celebrations," Becket attorney Andrea Butler told Fox News Digital.



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Many Olvera Street merchants belong to families that have operated there since the marketplace opened in 1930. They also help organize annual religious and cultural celebrations that attract visitors to El Pueblo.

Butler said the First Amendment does not require communities to erase religious history whenever someone objects to its presence.

“The idea that the founders would have thought a passive religious display celebrating a historical moment in time needed to be taken down because it violated the First Amendment is really absurd,” Butler said.

Valerie Hanley, treasurer of the merchants association foundation, said “one offended bystander shouldn’t get to decide” which parts of Los Angeles’ history can be told.

The stakes extend beyond two displays. Erasing Christian artifacts and symbols from public life separates communities from the faith that shaped their history. Such erasure is also one of the mile markers commonly seen during Marxist takeovers, which seek to displace Christianity and replace enduring religious authority with the power of the state.

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