

Scrooge Strikes College Campus, Banning Any Mention of Holidays

Christmas trees, menorahs and the colors red, green, silver and blue have been deemed inappropriate for college campuses this holiday season, at least according to the Office of Diversity and Inclusion at the University of Minnesota. Only general decorations and party themes such as “winter celebration” were allowed at the University’s College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences “Respecting Religious Diversity” event this month. These new guidelines have earned CFANS the 2017 Ebenezer Award, Becket’s lowest (dis)honor, awarded for the most ridiculous affront to the Christmas and Hanukkah season.

Each year, Becket reflects on the most absurd affronts to the Christmas and Hanukkah season and bestows upon the most outrageous offender a lump of coal. Previous winners include the American Humanist Association, which tried to stop schools from sending care packages to children in need, and the Department of Veteran Affairs which banned employees at its Salem, Virginia facility from saying “Merry Christmas” to veterans. (See list of previous winners.)

“It makes little sense to celebrate religious diversity by banning any sense of actual holiday celebration,” said Montse Alvarado, executive director of Becket. “And what do they have against color schemes, are we living in communist Cuba?”

The University of Minnesota’s Dean’s Dialogues “Religious Diversity and Holidays” event within CFANS is committed to creating an “inclusive” community. As part of the event, a list of guidelines was distributed to students and staff advising all to avoid certain inappropriate holiday items and

to report any violations to the Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action. Banned items include bows and wrapped gifts, Christmas trees, dreidels, Menorahs, bells and Santa Claus. Colors were regulated too: red and green for their connection to "Christian tradition" and blue, white and silver for their connection to "Jewish Hanukkah."

"A hearty bah-humbug toast to university officials who make Christian and Jewish students feel like second class citizens at a time that should be full of brotherly love and giving," said Alvarado.

Because religious holidays are an important part of human culture, governments and public institutions are allowed to recognize and celebrate those holidays with appropriate symbols. The Supreme Court has long upheld government holiday displays that send "a message of pluralism and freedom of belief during the holiday season," including displays that have distinctive religious elements. Although public opinion and the law are on the side of religious holidays, some bureaucrats insist on scrubbing the public square of any religious references. This often leads to absurd results.

Becket wishes everyone a Merry Christmas, a Happy Hanukkah, and a joyous New Year to all! In the words of Tiny Tim: "God bless us, every one!"