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Andrew Trinh

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Contributing Photographer:

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Faculty Advisor:

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Letter to the Editor and other contributions are welcome from any member of the Chadwick community. We reserve the right to edit letters for reasons of length and clarity. Other material will be evaluated on an individual basis. Mail all correspondence to the address below, or give it to the receptionist with "For the Mainsheet" prominently displayed.

For subscriptions and/or advertising information please contact Susan Wang at mainsheet@chadwickschool.org.

The Mainsheet
 Chadwick School
 26800 South Academy Drive
 Palos Verdes Peninsula, CA 90274-3997
 (310) 377-1543, Ext. 4154 ~ Fax: (310) 377-0380

Staff Editorial

Understanding how to celebrate the holidays politically correctly

As we approach the holiday season, we are once again reminded of the political incorrectness of it. Everywhere we go, beautifully decorated Christmas trees provide the backdrop for free candy canes, visits with Santa, and tinsel. Everywhere. When the wintertime begins, so do the "Christmas shopping sales" and the endless Christmas decorations.

Consider this: Towns do not gather together to light a decorative menorah, yet lighting a Christmas tree, synonymous with one of the biggest holidays in Christianity, is incredibly common. No movie tells viewers that "Hanukkah needs to be saved," but holiday movies gladly have a plot centered on saving Christmas. And why is that?

America celebrates the holidays in this way for two reasons. One of the main reasons is because for the entire existence of the United States, the majority religion has been Christianity, which explains why most decorations are centered on Christianity.

It does not justify the fact that only Christmas decorations seem to be out at this time, but it is an explanation as to why Christmas decorations are so common and prevalent during this time of the year, even in a public space such as a park or mall.

But another reason for that may be because this time of the year is a holiday time, not just religiously but culturally. Because Christmas celebrations are so common in society, celebrating Christmas has become so synonymous

with American culture around the holidays that many who are not Christian celebrate Christmas as well.

They do not celebrate Christmas for the same reasons as Christians do, to celebrate the birth of the savior Jesus Christ, but as a time to enjoy beautifully smelling trees, gingerbread and giving thanks through giving gifts.

If society really were to celebrate Christmas with the same purpose as Christians, we would be seeing nativities (a manger scene depicting the birth of Jesus) everywhere instead of Christmas decorations. Really, a Christmas tree is more a sign of the secular holiday spirit celebration than it is a celebration of the birth of Jesus.



A nativity depicts the birth of Jesus.

Christmas tree.

Even at Chadwick, we wonder how to combat the seemingly political incorrectness of the holiday season.

When the school first decided to put up a Christmas tree in the Rotunda (yes, it is a Christmas tree), the Student Council decided to point out the political incorrectness of the tree by jokingly referring to it as the "non-denominational holiday conifer."

It only seemed appropriate that a non-denominational school should not put up a symbol of a religious holiday, and so the name was started.

Well, the name has stuck, and students still refer to the Christmas tree as the "non-denominational holiday conifer." The reality is that that name was created as a joke.

Chadwick puts up a Christmas tree every year, and it gets decorated with various adornments, with gifts for the holiday gift exchange put underneath.

Chadwick, we would say, celebrates the holidays, but it does not celebrate Christmas.

So we should ask ourselves: Is there anything wrong with celebrating the holidays by putting up our Christmas tree? Is it wrong to be wearing holiday sweaters and Santa hats to school?

And are we really celebrating Christmas or just merely the holidays?

Just some things to consider as we move forward during this wonderful holiday season.



by MICHELLE GELLER

Michelle Geller: Just call it a Christmas tree

As the holiday season is upon us, questions arise between non-denominational and Christian-dominated beliefs and jargon.

You'll come to school on a day when everyone wears "ugly Christmas sweaters." People will wear Santa hats and there will be jingles dancing over the radio.

You'll walk into the Rotunda, the center and fundamental core of campus, breathe in the wafting smell of pine needles, and notice the "non-denominational coniferous tree" sitting in the heart of the building.

We wear a mask and cover up the inherent reality...it is a Christmas tree.

Some argue that the tree has non-denominational characteristics when

we decorate it with vibrant colors and polaroids. I, however, disagree.

Let me ask you this: Where did we get that tree? Probably at a Christmas tree lot. No matter how we change the name to have secular meaning, it doesn't hide the reality that it is a Christmas tree. Its meaning still remains the same.

"It is disrespectful to the American Christian traditions to call this symbol of Christmas, a very important holiday in the Christian faith, not its proper name," says junior Jamie Castleman.

She adds, "Calling it 'non-denominational' entails that all religions celebrate during this time with a tree. This furthermore suggests that this tree is also a holy Jewish, or any other religion's, symbol."

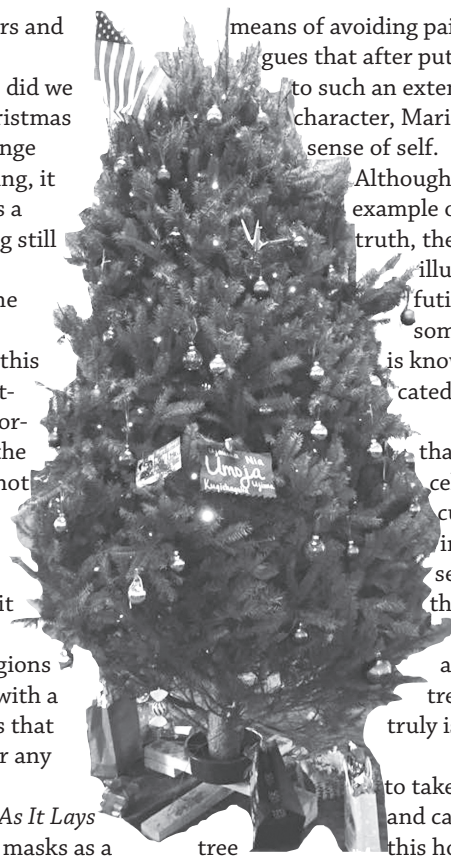
Joan Didion's novel *Play It As It Lays* portrays characters who put on masks as a

means of avoiding pain. Didion argues that after putting on masks to such an extent, the main character, Maria, loses her true sense of self.

Although an extreme example of masking the truth, the novel further illustrates the futility in masking something when it is known to be fabricated.

I'm not saying that it's wrong to celebrate various cultures during the holiday season. I do think, however, that we should acknowledge the tree for what it truly is.

I challenge you to take off this mask and call it a Christmas tree this holiday season.



Chadwick's "holiday tree" in the Rotunda.