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2008 Worst Grinches When will they learn they can't stop "Christmas from coming?"

By Dan Gainor and Colleen Raezler

Christmas has been called "The Most Wonderful Time of the Year" but it also brings out people who have "hearts two sizes too small" and whose heads aren't "screwed on just right."

That's right, Grinches.

The Culture & Media Institute used its annual [Grinch-o-Meter](#) to rate some of the year's high-profile attacks on Christmas, as well as some spirited defenses of it. It's like a "naughty and nice" list for 2008.

Grinches

Grinches appeared in various forms this year. The Grinchiest of all used the Christmas season to launch full-fledged attacks on Christianity. Politically correct Grinches tried to make Christmas as inclusive as possible by making it something other than "Christmas." Clueless Grinches showed good intentions but didn't quite spread Christmas cheer. ("The three best words to describe you are as follows and I quote: 'Stink!' 'Stank!' 'Stunk!'")

1. *Playboy* magazine made an unlikely entrance into the [Christmas fray](#) by depicting its December cover girl as the Virgin Mary in the Mexican version of the magazine. According to [Reuters](#), the issue hit newsstands on Dec. 1, just in time for the annual pilgrimage to the shrine of the Virgin of Guadalupe in Mexico City. Predictably, *Playboy* issued a statement that said,

“Playboy Mexico never meant for the cover or images to offend anyone” and offered its “sincerest apologies.”



Depicting the mother of Christ as a porn-star: 10 Grinches, plus two.

2. On the West coast, Washington state Governor Christine Gregoire allowed the Freedom From Religion Foundation to place a sign near a nativity display in the state capital building. “At this season of the Winter Solstice may reason prevail,” read the sign. “There are no gods, no devils, no angels, no heaven or

hell. There is only our natural world. Religion is but myth and superstition that hardens hearts and enslaves minds.”

It took a [blizzard](#) of phone calls instigated by Fox News’ Bill O’Reilly for Gregoire’s office, in conjunction with Attorney General Rob McKenna’s office, to issue a [statement](#) that said in part, “the U.S. Supreme Court has been consistent and clear that, under the Constitution’s First Amendment, once government admits one religious display or viewpoint onto public property, it may not discriminate against the content of other displays, including the viewpoints of nonbelievers.”

Dan Barker of the Freedom From Religion Foundation said during an appearance on the Dec. 4 “Fox & Friends” that the nativity scene represents “hate speech” and “a direct attack on good human values.”

The Freedom from Religion Foundation also placed [billboards](#) in Washington and Wisconsin that proclaimed, “Reason’s Greetings.”

Allowing disrespectful signs to be placed near Christian displays and labeling the nativity scene “hate speech” are direct attacks against Christmas.

Calling the Nativity Scene “hate speech”: 10 Grinches.

Gregoire hiding behind the First Amendment to allow attacks on Christmas: 9 Grinches.

3. On November 18, the American Humanist Association, an [organization](#) that promotes “trying to behave decently without expectation of rewards or punishment after you are dead,” started to run ads on Washington, D.C. Metro buses. The ads stated, “Why believe in a god? Just be good for goodness’ sake.”

AHA’s Editorial Director Fred Edwards defended the \$40,000 ad campaign, telling the Associated Press, “Our reason for doing it during the holidays is there are an awful lot of agnostics, atheists and other types of non-theists who feel a little alone during the holidays because of its association with traditional religion.”

Edwards used the generic term “holidays” in his defense. But by quoting a line from “**Santa Claus is Coming to Town,**” the AHA is clearly targeting Christmas.

Using a beloved Christmas song in an ad attacking Christmas: 10 Grinches

4. While there’s some dispute about who was present at the birth of Christ, it’s reasonable to think president-elect Barack Obama and his wife Michelle were probably not in attendance. That minor fact however, has not [stopped](#) Italian craftsmen from creating Nativity figurines in the Obamas’ likeness. (“What a great Grinchy trick!”) Other figurines include politicians such as French President Nicolas Sarkozy and Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi.

Depicting modern-day politicians as Nativity figures: 8 Grinches.

5. Then we have the politically correct Grinches. The town of Patchogue (“just North of Who-ville”) on Long Island changed the name of the “Patchogue Christmas Boat Parade” to the “Patchogue Boat Parade of Lights” [reportedly](#) because one person complained about the use of “Christmas” in the event’s name. [Reports](#) also indicate that the Nov. 23 event drew less attendance than past events that used “Christmas” in the title.

Removal of Christmas and even “holiday” from an event name: 7 Grinches

6. Some Grinches were simply clueless. Viewers who tuned into NBC’s Christmas at Rockefeller Center saw pop star Britney (“Cindy-Lou Who”) Spears wish everyone a “happy holidays” in her introduction – and this after she noted “Christmas is one of my favorite times of the year and before she reminded everyone, “it’s Christmas at Rockefeller Center.” Disney pop

princess Miley Cyrus also wished the audience “happy holidays” after singing “Rockin’ Around the **Christmas** Tree.”

Wishing audiences “Happy Holidays” during a Christmas event: 5 Grinches.

7. NBC’s Matt Lauer “puzzled three hours ‘til his puzzler was sore,” but still joined the “clueless Grinch” ranks when he wished Rev. Rick Warren “happy holidays” during a Dec. 3 interview in which Warren promoted his new book, “The Purpose of **Christmas**.” Lauer did note during the same interview that “it’s almost as if, at every cash register at every store across the country, you should have the title of your book that says, in question form, ‘What is the Purpose of Christmas?’ ...before you’re allowed to charge something on a credit card.”

Acknowledging that there is more to Christmas than the economy: 0 Grinches

Wishing a reverend “Happy Holidays:” 8 Grinches.

Combining the two in the same segment: 4 Grinches.

As with everything else, the Grinch-like behavior previously noted has its counterpart “down in Who-ville.” These are people who believe “Christmas Day is in our grasp so long as we have hands to clasp” and have hearts at least “three sizes” larger than the Grinch.

1. JoEllen Murphy, a Washington, D.C., local, stood up against the AHA and raised nearly \$9,000 to run counter ads that say, “Why Believe? Because I created you and I love you, for goodness’ sake. – God.”

Daniel Zanzosa raised private funds to display a Nativity scene in the Illinois state Capitol Rotunda. Even the ACLU backed away from fighting this Christmas as no state funds were used for the display and a spokesman, Ed Yohnka noted, objectors “can engage in counter-speech by putting up their own display inside the Capitol Building.

Philip Butler, vice-president of Fireworks by Grucci, refused to participate in the Patchogue Boat Parade of Lights. Last year the company donated \$5,000 to the event but dropped its sponsorship after the name was changed.

Fox News’ Bill O’Reilly used his show and influence and tenaciously refused to allow the governor of Washington to duck the issue of allowing an anti-Christmas message next to the Nativity scene in the statehouse.

Fighting to allow Christmas in the Public Square: 10 hearts, plus two.

2. Rev. Rick Warren published a new book, “The Purpose of Christmas.” During his promotional interview on the Dec. 3 broadcast of “Today,” Warren told Matt Lauer and viewers, “I think you have to understand that Jesus Christ came for your greatest benefit. It's like unwrapping the gift to him. The bottom line of Christmas is you matter to God. He made you, he loves you and he sent himself to earth so we can know what He's like.”

Eleven million people tuned into ABC's annual broadcast of “A Charlie Brown Christmas” aired on Dec. 8. The Christmas special in which Linus tells Charlie Brown “what Christmas is all about” was the number one TV program among kids aged 2-11 and second among adults aged 18-49.

Spreading the true message of Christmas: 10 hearts.

3. Federal Judge William Griesbach fought back against the Freedom from Religion Foundation's legal intimidation in Green Bay, Wisconsin. The organization brought suit against Green Bay because the city's 2007 Christmas display features a Nativity scene. Griesbach dismissed the case due to lack of standing. According to the Christian legal organization Liberty Counsel, Griesbach ruled the claims made by Freedom from Religion were “so fleeting and slight that they do not warrant pursuing in federal court.”

Standing up against the tyranny of the minority: 6 hearts.

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