

**Note: This Op-Ed was published in the San Diego Union-Tribune on Friday, Nov. 25, 2016. It may be found in the U-T hard copy on page B-11.**

# Faith-neutral name is needed for parade



Several attempts over the years have failed to convince community organizers to remove the word "Christmas" from the annual La Jolla Christmas Parade. (File photo)

**DAVID H. KATZ**

A name means everything in our world. Whether it is the name of a child, the name of a school, the name of a special neighborhood in a community, or even the name of a community parade — a name is a “window into the heart” of the giver.

That is why the subject of this brief commentary is the importance of a particular name that needs to be changed in order to reflect the proper “window of an entire community’s heart.”

Specifically, I am referring to the La Jolla community parade that is held every year in early December to celebrate the holiday season. Since its beginnings many decades ago, this annual festive parade has been named “The La Jolla Christmas Parade.” During the early 20th century, when La Jolla was a small, and exclusive, seaside community essentially restricted to Caucasians of the Christian faith, this name was indeed the “window of the community’s heart” and, therefore, appropriate.

However, things began to change in the 1950s and 1960s when previously “sleepy,” and relatively exclusive, La Jolla began to evolve into a major technological giant in San Diego, and eventually, the world. This change began when General Atomics was created at the then upper outskirts of La Jolla, and then again when the state agreed to develop what is now UC San Diego on nearby land.

These events changed everything — in the physical real estate landscaping and, most importantly, the composition of the population of La Jolla. Gradually, from the late 1960s to the present day, La Jolla’s citizenry evolved from an all-white Christian population to a highly diverse, heterogeneous citizenry consisting of Christians, Jews, Muslims, atheists and others.

Today’s La Jollans reflect the vast heterogeneity of peoples found everywhere on our planet, and contribute magnificent resources of both innovation and wealth throughout our community and the world. Our town’s most dedicated benefactor, Ellen Browning Scripps, must certainly be smiling from above.

Why is it important to discuss the significance of changing the name of an annual December parade in La Jolla? Because we, as citizens, should choose a name that most accurately defines our local annual parade as the true “window into our hearts” as it exists today. Moreover, and unbeknown to most of the local public, we are actually breaking the law — as stipulated by the Supreme Court. Here’s why:

The accepted definition of “Christmas” is: 1. A Christian feast commemorating the birth of Jesus. 2. Dec. 25, the day on which this feast is observed as a public holiday in many countries.

According to current Supreme Court edicts, the following stipulation provides that: “Religion is a pervasive and enduring human phenomenon which is an appropriate, if not desirable, subject of secular study.”

“However, there is a critical difference between practicing religion and teaching about religion. Most importantly, it is constitutionally permissible for public schools to teach about religion but unconstitutional for public schools to observe religious holidays or practice religion. School officials and parents must be careful not to cross the line between “the laudable educational goal of promoting a student’s knowledge of and appreciation for this nation’s cultural and religious diversity, and the impermissible endorsement of religion forbidden by the Establishment Clause.”

The Supreme Court has said that religion may only be studied when it is “presented objectively as part of a secular program of education.” Such study must have a distinctly nonreligious purpose.

In short, these rulings preclude the exclusionary use of terminology referring to a singular religion.

For these, and other reasons stated at the outset, the word “Christmas” must be removed from the annual La Jolla Parade’s title, and the parade renamed to one that is faith-neutral. The new name must reflect our currently existing widely diverse and heterogeneous composition of La Jolla’s present citizenry, which includes people of all faiths and beliefs.

*Katz, a semi-retired physician, is a former chairman of immunology at Scripps Research and founder of several La Jolla biotech companies. He has lived in La Jolla since 1976.*

**Editor’s note:** *We invited the La Jolla Christmas Parade organization to submit an opposing viewpoint, but the invitation was declined.*

The following Letters to the Editor were published in the San Diego Union-Tribune on Monday, Dec. 5, 2016. Please note the second letter, "Christmas should be out of parade's name" submitted by Howard G. Singer of La Jolla.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### We should improve, not just change, San Diego

Regarding "High-rises heading toward Hillcrest" (Nov. 28): Hillcrest has always been a walking community, and still is. What's this about needing big buildings in Hillcrest? Must we continually change things? Just guessing the developers are calling.

Most of the proposed changes are not improvements, just different. Maintain Qualcomm Stadium. Keep Seaport Village. Absolutely do not build a parking garage in the middle of our park or change the Cabrillo Bridge. Save the parking south of the Organ Pavilion for handicapped people and valet parking. There are lots of other places to build a parking garage.

Still wondering why we don't have the trolley going to the airport and Balboa Park if we want public transportation. Clean up the city and fill the potholes. Plant more trees.

Jonnie Johnson  
El Cajon

### Christmas should be out of parade's name

Instead of sprinting from La Jolla's dark past, when discrimination and prejudice prevented African-Americans, foreign nationals, Native Americans and Jews from purchasing houses or real property, individuals affiliated with the La Jolla Christmas

Parade, contrary to the rest of San Diego, have instead insisted on continuing their beloved good old days. The La Jolla Christmas Parade event chair and her associates have refused all requests for interviews with every media organization and the San Diego Human Relations Commission.

December events in Balboa Park, Chula Vista, El Cajon, Encinitas, North Park, Ocean Beach and Pacific Beach all reflect faith-neutral names.

Since the La Jolla Christmas Parade excludes no group from participating, its name, by law, must reflect that fact and mirror the reality of our democratic, secular and global 21st-century society.

Howard G. Singer  
La Jolla

### Capitalism definitely can have altruistic side

Regarding "Castro's socialist system deserves burial, not praise" (Dec. 1): What deserves burial is professor Brian Simpson's embrace of egoism to the exclusion of altruism. As a disciple of Ayn Rand, he espouses a "me first and always" philosophy of pure self-interest with no regard for the plight of those less fortunate; a philosophy that says there are those who take advantage and those who are taken advantage of.

As a supporter of capitalism, I do not believe in such an "either/or" system.

Capitalists and capitalism can, should be and, I believe, are, to a good measure, altruistic. Why? Because it is good for business. Businesses that take care of their employees, that are good corporate citizens and that contribute to their communities by helping those in need enjoy greater, longer-lasting success.

Helping others benefits the giver in ways Simpson apparently has no capacity to understand. So sad.

Bill Pope  
San Diego

### Voters are getting just what they voted against

Regarding "Donald Trump's cabinet could be wealthiest in modern history" Nov. 30): I can't say I wasn't warned.

They said over and over that if I voted for Hillary Clinton, Wall Street would be running the country. I voted for Clinton anyway and, sure enough, Wall Street is set to run the country.

Paul Ward  
Clairemont

### Trump detractors are ignoring U.S. history

Those criticizing President-elect Trump for conflicts of interest and nepotism don't seem to recall political history.

Do they not recall Democrat John F. Kennedy's family had a billion-dollar-plus financial empire with international real estate holdings?

Do they not recall J.F.K.

appointed his brother as attorney general, the one-and-the-same official responsible for investigation and prosecution of federal conflicts of interest?

Do they not recall as president, Democrat Bill Clinton appointed his wife to create a sweeping federal health care system? Poor memories or hypocrisy?

Doug Stuart  
Rancho Bernardo

### Electoral College could still make this right

Why does the press keep referring to Trump as president-elect? In my opinion, he is not the president-elect. Hillary Clinton is. Nationwide, Clinton got more than 2 million votes more. The people elected her. Not until the Electoral College meets and reverses the will of the people will he be "president-elect."

A person in Wyoming has 362 percent more power in a presidential election than a person in California. This is not how a democracy is supposed to work.

Jack Machun  
San Diego

### California's liberalism will be its downfall

California is clearly the capital of liberal America — with a mandate on redistribution policies.

The trouble with the liberal community is it looks from the desert and sees nothing but green grass over the fence. What many don't see is that it takes a job and hard work to jump