

Early Christmas displays neglect Thanksgiving



Jean Kaul

Dear Santa,
There is only one thing I want for Christmas, and no, it's not world peace. I want Christmas to stay in December and Thanksgiving to stay in November. Wait, you say — Christmas is still Dec. 25, not Nov. 25. Christmas still has its usual spot on the calendar, Santa, but there's just one problem.
As of Halloween, all the stores that carry decorations, presents made by your hard-working elves (I've noticed they have the wrong

address for the North Pole at the stores — all the toys read China on the bottom) and all other Christmas doodads have been advertising in force. There are Christmas carols playing, display trees lit up and warnings that you need to get your shopping done early, otherwise you might miss out. Miss out? Santa, every time I see that, I laugh. It's not even December yet, and although I'm thankful that whatever store I might be in is so concerned about my Christmas experience, I'm pretty sure I won't forget Christmas, even without their constant reminders.

My big problem with Christmas season becoming longer and longer is the damage it does to one of my favorite holidays: Thanksgiving. Santa, I think you'd agree Thanksgiving is an important holiday — without taking time to reflect on

everything we need to be thankful for, our often greedy Christmas behavior goes unchecked. Now, Santa, other readers might disagree with me. They might cite the fact that Thanksgiving is rooted in the oppression of indigenous peoples, making its message of thankfulness and appreciation a loaded one. Or they just might not like pumpkin pie. Well, I disagree. Not only is pumpkin pie delicious, I think the message of Thanksgiving is needed despite the screwing-over of Squanto.

During these rough economic times, which are just going to get rougher as the holidays approach, Christmas might lose some of its appeal for the materially motivated celebrators. A card reading, "Honey, I managed to pay the gas bill another month," doesn't quite have the same thrill as a new set of

golf clubs. Disillusionment will set in for those who see Christmas as a me-first season. A longer Christmas season just adds to it, Santa. But if Thanksgiving is celebrated and reflected upon in the manner it should be, we'll think more about each other and less about what presents we're getting.

Putting Christmas back in its proper place will mean a lot fewer people driven into debt — making January and February happier months than they usually are. Mothers will assuage their gifting guilt by making batches and batches of cookies — and really, the highlight of the holiday season is the food, right? Sorry Santa, I forgot Mrs. Claus put you on the South Beach Diet. It will make Christmas Day more special. I think a lot of times, the holiday hangover hits early because the buildup to Christmas is

so long (or it might be the excessive amounts of eggnog I drink Christmas Eve).

Now Santa, really the person I'm looking out for is you. For years, tots have had unreasonable expectations about what presents they should be getting from you. Toy fire trucks and Pogo sticks have turned into Xbox 360s and Grand Theft Auto. By thinking about what's really important — families spending time together, fewer renderings of "Grandma Got Run Over by a Reindeer" and really good Christmas punch — we'll take the focus and pressure off you and your hardworking elves. After all, the elves have a workshop, not a sweatshop, right?

Love,
Jean

Jean Kaul is a junior English major from Marengo, Ill.

AROUND THE QUAD

What do you usually do to relieve stress?



"I listen to music or write. I write if I'm really frustrated."

Anh Nguyen
junior



"I work out or watch sitcoms. That '70s Show and Scrubs are my favorite."

Anna Natzke
junior



"Listen to music."

Kara Drury
senior



"Listen to music, pray or both."

Joe Bass
freshman

Negative responses to election results should be reversed



Ryan Carothers

After the winner of the 2008 election was announced last Tuesday night, millions of viewers throughout the world watched the negative reaction from the Republican Party during Senator McCain's speech. Despite McCain's wishes to congratulate and support the next president, people attending the speech continued to boo President-elect Obama. This immature reaction carried on through the numerous texts I received that night and on the Facebook statuses of many conservative users. The hateful response to an election outcome by supporters of the losing political party seemed extreme.

During this past presidential campaign, I began to notice a

popular notion among conservative voters that Obama is a socialist and would ruin America if voted into office. This label of socialism placed on Obama usually only was expressed by devout conservatives, but the label didn't truly explode among McCain supporters until after McCain lost the election. I found this to be an extremely bitter attitude considering the fact that Republicans have been in office for the majority of the past 23 years, and the majority of the country now wants to see a different take on leadership.

The election is over, and there is no turning back. The negative attitude that has been displayed recently should be expressed to a certain degree. Yes, people can express their opinions — this is America — but I think it's our duty to embrace the new president with our support and refrain from any personal attacks.

Such a bitter attitude does not reflect well on the Republican Party, and regardless of frustration,

Obama should be given a chance to carry out his plans and show results before anyone complains.

If anyone has an issue with Obama, it should not be expressed in such a childish manner, but rather in legitimate arguments that can be supported. If people just continue to name call, they are no better than the politicians so many others like to complain about. Obama didn't become President-elect because of force or political conniving. The beauty of democracy is that the power to choose elected officials rests with the people. Last

Tuesday, the people exercised this right and voted Obama into office. This was a historic election that should be viewed as a positive step for the United States and should be given a chance by everyone.

Ryan Carothers is a freshman communications major from Kansas City, Mo.

It's our duty to embrace the new president with our support and refrain from personal attacks.

Defeatist attitude toward gender relations fails to reflect progress



Jackie Gonzalez

Last Thursday was intended to be a completely empowering and fantastic dive into feminist ideals, but instead got off on a less than inspiring start. I first attended a lecture by feminist author Tolu Tolu, (see story, p. 11) followed by my third annual "Vagina Monologues" audition. The audition went as planned, but the speaker most definitely fell short. The self-proclaimed "keeping it real" motivational speaker and author kept her discussion short and sweet. Sure, it was entertaining and she has led quite the life. But when it was over, not only was I more or less unmotivated to combat female exploitation, but I hoped that the women in attendance did not take her advice to heart. Tolu Tolu had an incredibly defeatist attitude toward

intimate relations with men. It was disappointing to see a woman of such stature disregard all men as a lost cause.

Although she did not divulge much information from her book about the exploitation of women worldwide, she discussed what's on every college student's mind: relationships. However, her advice was blunt and irrationally over generalized. She told us to simply accept the fact that men do not want to listen to women, and when they agree to listen, it's

because they want sex. She compared all male behavior to the days of the week: predictable and unchangeable. To her, with no regard for the media's influence on adolescent development, male behavior was simply the result of genetics. She divided men into two categories, the alpha males and the omegas. There was no in-between. There was no category for all the decent men in the world.

Much to my dismay, I knew she wasn't the only person who felt that way about the opposite sex. With all the progress that has been

made, to assume that men will never listen seems like an enormous step back from contemporary societal expectations. Maybe this is a cultural thing. Because the event was more geared toward black culture, it made me reflect on cultural norms and evaluate some of my assumptions. But why would common courtesies fall under cultural expectations? The fact that a man should treat his significant other with respect should be obvious. It should transcend cultural norms. Granted, on a global scale, this unfortunately is not the case. But in terms of Americans and those living in America, it should be embedded in our blood to treat others courteously and with respect, especially when interacting with our significant others.

Cultural traditions should not play a role in determining whether or not it is okay for a man to be disrespectful to a woman. These types of behaviors without a doubt should be universal, and inherent in our daily actions. My advice (and I'm sure most women would agree) is this: If your partner is rude, leave them. Relationships require time, support and most of all, respect, so act accordingly.

Jackie Gonzalez is a senior communication and history major from San Diego, Calif.

Students need to work for change in Middle East policy



Andrew Kindiger

As Veteran's Day drifts to the back of our minds let's not forget about the ongoing struggle in the Middle East. During the election, both candidates tended to focus more on domestic policy — rightfully so because of the nature of our economy — yet the American people should keep in mind that the war in Iraq, as well as the continuing struggle in Afghanistan, cannot be ignored.

That's not to say our government does not respect and commend the sacrifices of those who serve our nation — both President Bush and President-elect Barack Obama attended services Tuesday to honor those who continue to serve and those who have fallen in combat. Military occupation still plays a key role in stabilizing Iraq and Afghanistan, but many more diplomatic initiatives will be needed in order to give these situations the full attention needed to bring resolution.

The occupation in Afghanistan already has depleted many resources of NATO, the chief organization for international military operations, and the war in Iraq continues to become more expensive. Both the United States and the international community have reached a limit when it comes to military effectiveness. What is needed now is more concentration on extending ties with Middle Eastern nations to ease the radical chaos in the region as well as ensure stability after military forces are evacuated.

This issue should be as important to the American population as it is to politicians. We cannot afford to make any more mistakes by continuing to confront the problem with our military strength. The time has come to explore options for lasting change and most importantly, to begin to bring home the troops who have been involved in an occupation demanding more time than what was originally intended.

So how can the average college

student learn more about this situation? It's going to take more than joining a group on Facebook. We might actually have to do something as drastic as read a few books. I'm not suggesting that everyone at Truman or other universities become scholars of Middle Eastern affairs, but as college students we have the unique opportunity to take time to learn more about other cultures and about the political situations facing the international community.

The Middle East is not as uniform as the media or the Bush Administration has made it seem. The region is made up of countries that have unique dynamics and cultural sensitivities. This becomes important when investigating the situation facing our nation in regard to both wars because as politicians start making decisions for future change, the academic community should be ready to respond based on its own perspective and analysis of the situation.

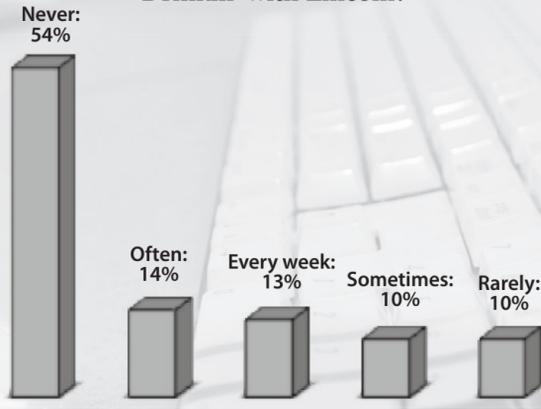
If we become more informed now as students, we can use our potential as voters to help influence future political decisions. One of the main reasons the war in Iraq started in the first place was because at the time Americans were told we needed to be concerned, but once scholars and analysts looked at the situation more carefully it seemed we might have jumped the gun.

If Americans would take the time to inform themselves about the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, there is a better chance that political decisions will be influenced in a positive way. Even though Obama is well-informed concerning the international political climate, it is our responsibility as citizens, and even more as students, to try to understand as much as we can about a situation that has not yet been resolved. Although the war was not as big of an issue in the 2008 election as it was in 2004, it becomes more complex everyday. As the time comes to start integrating a more diplomatic approach in Iraq as well as Afghanistan, students should become more informed about the Middle East to fully grasp the decisions made and assist in providing a voice for what would be the most ideal plan of action.

Andrew Kindiger is a sophomore English major from Liberty, Mo.

WEB POLL

How often do you participate in Drinkin' with Lincoln?



This week's question:

How much holiday gift buying have you done?

Vote online at trumanindex.com

This poll is not scientific and reflects the opinions of only those who have chosen to participate. The results cannot be assumed to represent the opinions of Internet users in general, nor the public as a whole.