"Merry Christmas" vs. "Happy Holidays"

It's seen as politically correct to wish people "Season's Greetings" in the holiday season, but many Americans -- and large retailers -- are going back to "Merry Christmas," for reasons related to religion or tradition.

Keywords

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More Saying a Defiant “Merry Christmas” Instead of Neutral “Happy Holidays”

BRIAN WILLIAMS, anchor:
There are 12 days remaining until Christmas. And while it's still OK to say Christmas, it's often not OK to wish people a "Merry Christmas," unless you're sure that's what they're into. That fear of being incorrect has led to political correctness that some say has run amuck, is out of control, during this holiday period. Our report on the fight tonight, from NBC's Mike Taibbi.

Ms. SYBIL GROFF: This one is from Wayne, New Jersey.

MIKE TAIBBI reporting:
Guide Sybil Groff at New York's Rockefeller Center is careful to label her December tour "Gotham Tide" but says visitors from every religion come here for one reason.

Ms. GROFF: Because they feel that this is the capital of Christmas culture.

TAIBBI: Christmas culture and not the culture of "Season's greetings" or "Happy holidays," the kind of all-inclusive neutral language that even emanates from the Bush White House. But this year,

Unidentified Woman: Merry Christmas to you.

TAIBBI: there are more retailers again trumpeting Christmas sales and more public Christmas celebrations despite what the official programs say because as Encinitas, California, Mayor Dan Dalager said from his family lawn mower shop,

Mayor DAN DALAGER: There I am right there.

TAIBBI: he never marched in a holiday parade.

Mayor DALAGER: People say, `Well, you know, how dare you change it?' I keep telling them, `I didn't change it. I changed it back.'

TAIBBI: Christian groups and their lawyers have made it plain they're ready to file suit or call for boycotts against anyone they feel is trying to take the "Christ" out of Christmas.
Mr. JERRY FALWELL (Christian Televangelist): We are for the first time on the offense, and we're kicking their butt out of the arena.
TAIBBI: But those who say your tax dollars shouldn't be used to celebrate Christmas alone have not backed off.
Mr. BARRY LYNN (Americans United for Separation of Church & State): If you have to go to City Hall to get spiritual at this season, you need to find a different church to go to.
TAIBBI: But if the debate this year seems edgier, angrier, some observers on both sides suggest it's because the broader cultural war beyond that debate is more heated than ever.
Mr. CHARLES HAYNES (First Amendment Center): I think there are people on both sides of these fights that have a stake in keeping the culture war going, they raise money, they raise emotion.
TAIBBI: Mike Taibbi, NBC News, New York.