

Activist's boycott ends after Macy's relents: Zamorano calls off Christmas boycott

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About this time last year, Manuel Zamorano was making his list, checking it twice, and Macy's department stores came up naughty, not nice. This year, the Folsom, California, grandfather is singing a different tune, something more like "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas."

Angry that the venerable department store refused to use *Merry Christmas* in its advertising or among its sales clerks, Zamorano launched a boycott, which Macy's officials quickly dismissed last year. But as increasing numbers of retailers face pressure from conservative Christians and others to ditch the more generic term *holidays* in favor of explicit references to Christmas, Zamorano says Macy's has relented and he has called off the boycott.

"When you consider that 80 to 90 percent of the American public celebrates Christmas, that [retailers] actively solicit and advertise [to get them to] to buy their merchandise for Christmas, that they make millions and millions of dollars, and they're not willing to mention the words *Merry Christmas*, something is drastically wrong," Zamorano said.

Zamorano, 57, says other battles loom ahead, including a boycott against Sears, which he says has purged *Christmas* from its stores and advertising. Other targets include:

- Lands' End, which the New York-based Catholic League has battled in an effort to return *Merry Christmas* to the pages of its catalogs.
- Target stores, which the American Family Association says has banned Christmas from its stores and advertising, and is the focus of an online AFA petition that includes at least 600,000 names.

Among stores that make little or no reference to Christmas, activists say, are Staples, Home Depot, JC Penney, Best Buy, Kohl's, Kmart and Office Max, and these could be the next targets of consumer boycotts.

"Shoppers are growing disgruntled by companies that are choosing to do away with a simple greeting like 'Merry Christmas,' and they are showing it with their pocketbooks," said Randy Sharp, director of special projects for the Mississippi-based American Family Association.

Other retailers, meanwhile, have followed Macy's lead in carving out more room for Christmas. After complaints from the Catholic League, Wal-Mart agreed to create a Christmas page on its Web site, rather than holiday, to match its sections for Hanukkah and Kwanzaa.

Lowe's home improvement stores agreed to call its "holiday trees" Christmas trees, and the AFA says it has promises from Walgreen's drugstores to include *Merry Christmas* in its 2006 Christmas ad campaign.

As for Macy's, executive vice president Louis Meunier said the store's electronic gift cards feature *Merry Christmas* this year, and *Christmas* is in its advertising jingle, print ads and New York store. -*Religion News Service*