

Cc: Pete Tingstrom

May 5, 2024

Aloha Honorable Gold Star Dad ~

Thank you for contacting BOYCOTT Shinnyo-en. Pete and I have partnered on this mission for two years. Pete has not seen your heartfelt and eloquent letter and I do not speak for him. Appreciate your devotion for inclusivity and include him now. The two of you can discuss freely as appropriate. Have Cc'd Pete and his direct email is listed above.

Let me first thank you for your heroic service to our great nation and American values. My gratitude isn't simply words. I consider you a revered hero of our nation. As a Gold Star Dad, your sacrifice is even greater and more honored. My wife and I come from military families. Our history isn't important to this discussion, but want you to know we come from within the family and know the tremendous sacrifice this lifetime profession requires of all.

Your honest, thoughtful comments made me sad. Actually cried reading your words. While I totally agree with your point about being inclusive, Shinnyo-en's action to include civilians has the intended or unintended consequence of diminishing the observation of our fallen brother & sisters, mothers & fathers.

StarAd ran a convenient poll last year (attached bottom). Only 12% of respondents stated that they considered Memorial Day to be a "military-based event/remembrance" — about 1 in 10 people. The VFW stated in 2002, "Changing the date merely to create three-day weekends has undermined the very meaning of the day. No doubt, this has contributed a lot to the general public's nonchalant observance of Memorial Day."

The VFW noted their frustration over 20 years ago. I come from Kaua'i. We're small town people and more traditional on the Garden Island. Memorial Day is reserved for the brave, fallen service members. Came to O'ahu late 2018; witnessed my first Memorial Day May 2019. Was shocked. I spent considerable time in meditation and prayer sitting quietly on the hallowed ground at Punchbowl. So quiet, but not peaceful ... our brothers and sisters spoke to me. Whispered so softly. They told me they are sad. Told me they didn't want to be forgotten, but they are forgotten — and lonely.

I returned often with my ukulele and played for them. I'm not very good, but my strumming floated on the gentle breezes and echoed across this sacred ground. My songs never sounded so beautiful. Could feel their spirits dancing. I knew at that time that they were calling me for an important mission.

Imagine for a moment that you have a container and you add 12 blue marbles. Anyone looking at the container would see the blue marbles. Now, add 88 red marbles. Anyone now looking at the container would quickly notice red marbles, but hardly notice those that were blue. The red marbles have overwhelmed the blue. The blue marbles now are diminished in importance.

I use 12 & 88, as these figures represent the percentages of O'ahu residents either observing our military heroes or doing something else on Memorial Day. We have increased "inclusiveness," as you correctly state. Our inclusion though has decreased the public's (1) awareness of the purpose of Memorial Day, and (2) honoring of the brave men and women who sacrificed ALL for each of us.

As a Gold Star Dad, do you accept the public's increasingly nonchalant attitude and lack of awareness of your child's sacrifice; of your family's tremendous loss? I do not, but certainly have no right to speak for you. I do speak for other families who do not accept an apathetic public forgetting the cost of the freedoms they so enjoy. These families ask, "Is it so heavy a burden to reserve but just one day for our brave, heroic fallen service members?"

I want you to understand that Pete, myself, as well as you value INCLUSIVITY ... on this point, I will speak for Pete. He and I however view inclusivity slightly different than you. We believe there is room for inclusion ... for all to be honored. Rather than a sole Memorial Day, we have suggested a Memorial Weekend. Let's not jam both red and blue marbles in the container on one day. Why the haste? How about honoring the red marbles on Sunday; blue marbles on Monday. We're including ALL our fallen family member and heroes OVER the weekend. We are ENLARGING the observation of our most dearly departed loved ones. We're not trampling on the memory of any; we're increasing the love and aloha for all those who matter most in our lives.

I want you to know how deeply grateful I am for your honest, loving and gracious comments. With your permission, if you feel committed to your position after our discussion, I would like to INCLUDE your comments in the public DOWNLOAD section of our website.

If this position is your final opinion, we would like your views represented to the public. We do not OWN the memory of our fallen heroes. The public should hear all sides. If you are committed to inclusivity on one day, I believe your view should be presented; and again, speaking for Pete out of turn, believe he respects your honored point of view as well.

I'll leave that decision to you. Please let me know how you would like to proceed. For what it is worth, I believe your heroic Son or Daughter deserves their own day.

I do wish to leave you with one final concern. Mentioned at the beginning: "Shinnyo-en's action to include civilians has the intended or unintended consequence of diminishing the observation of our fallen brother & sisters, mothers & fathers."

Possibly Shinnyo-en had poor understanding of the deep pain that led to the creation of Decoration Day, and later, Memorial Day. Their staff told us they had researched the history. Personally, I'm not sure how a Japanese civilian group concluded that Memorial Day is for both civilian and military observation. Giving Shinnyo-en the benefit of the doubt, we were willing to assume language and cultural differences led to this grave misunderstanding.

However, working on this issue for five years, I have found Shinnyo-en to be extremely arrogant and insensitive. They have shown no remorse or empathy for our position. Either they have selected Memorial Day simply to increase their financial reward or simply have the INTENDED objective of diminishing the remembrance of America's fallen heroes in Hawai'i.

It is no secret that the Japanese want greater control over Hawai'i. Always have. They live crowded on tiny islands. Americans have so much land. Hawai'i provided the USA with strategic control over the Pacific. And, brave American men and women had to push back, and punish Imperial Japan for their immoral aggression. This reality is painful for many Japanese.

Emperor Naruhito has expressed the monarchy's goals publicly many times and without reservation. His father, Akihito, spent this term on the Chrysanthemum Throne apologizing for his father,

Hirohito. Japan is tired of apologizing. Naruhito seeks to return Japan to their greatness. We hear similar statements from Vladimir Putin and Russia.

Japan and USA are strategically locked as allies today. We are great friends as people. Like you, I assume, I adore the Japanese and their culture. Our island is enriched with their presence and guidance.

Together, we face a rising China in the Pacific and world. We need each other. As Japan is limited in military capacity, Japan requires the continued sacrifice and service of America's military men and women. Strategically, I do not believe Japan is moral to allow a Buddhist Order to intentionally or unintentionally diminish the observance, respect and honoring of our brave, fallen heroes. Such behavior should be politely, but firmly, discouraged by Americans who understand the tremendous sacrifice of our brave fallen heroes and nation that we collectively paid to create this lasting peace.

The various murals displayed in the Memorial at Punchbowl highlight the cost financially to this nation, as well as sacrifice in human lives to protect our freedom and way of life. I simply cannot accept allowing a foreign power to diminish the value of the blue marbles in this container. Shinnyo-en's action does not follow the teachings of Buddha. For these reasons, I am both suspicious and motivated.

With deepest respect to you, and your family, for the tremendous service and sacrifice to our nation, I salute you and your Honored Child. Thank you for the FREEDOMS we all enjoy.

Scott Goold
BOYCOTT Shinnyo-en Floating Lantern

NOTE: Letter from Gold Star Dad will be included once permission is provided.

BIG Q

What's your main way of observing Memorial Day?

Today



B. General remembrance of loved one(s) (147 Votes)



46% — 88%

C. Enjoying day off or pre-summer gathering (136 Votes)



42%

A. Military-based event/remembrance (38 Votes)



12%

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This is not a scientific poll — results reflect only the opinions of those voting.