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Author Q & A

[Regarding *An Unacceptable Christmas*](#)

What is *An Unacceptable Christmas* about?

First of all, it's a cheerful holiday story, with plenty of candy canes, mistletoe kisses and eggnog. But it's more about the battle between ordinary folks and a heartless ruling class, hell-bent on ruining Christmas. I like to call it a "Political Christmas Carol." It features a cast of loathsome characters, not unlike the one we all know from that Dickens classic, only my Scrooges have no intention of reforming.

Briefly, what's the plot?

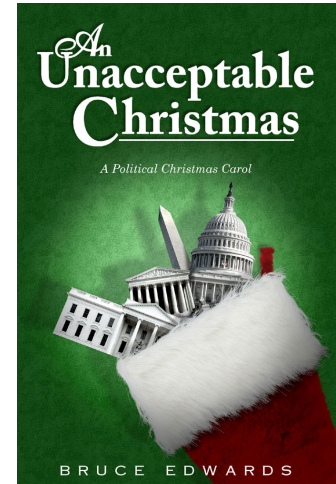
A little boy's father is a volunteer medic, serving in a brutal foreign war, when he is reported missing. It's Christmastime, and the boy writes to Santa Claus, asking that his dad be returned home safely. The problem is, writing letters to Santa is a federal offense. So is displaying Santa's image, or singing songs that mention his name. Outraged, the boy's teenage sister launches a nationwide campaign to force Congress to repeal the ban.

What inspired you to write this book?

In 2017 the federal government enacted the so-called Muslim travel ban. To this day, that controversial policy bars most followers of that religion from entering the U.S. Punishing people for their misconduct is one thing, but can they also be punished for what they believe? What they think? That seemed like a question worth exploring.

Why call on Santa Claus to address this issue?

The story needed to center on a belief system of some sort. I felt that focusing on religious faith might offend some readers. Believing in Santa, however, is practiced by children the world over. Choosing that figure allowed me to safely walk that line between what is real and what is imagined.



AN UNACCEPTABLE CHRISTMAS

By Bruce Edwards

Young Adult Fiction

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How did you come up with the "Santa ban?"

Most everyone has seen the Christmas movie *Miracle On 34th Street*. The story ends (spoiler alert!) with a courtroom judge declaring that Santa Claus does indeed exist. In the real world that decision would have been appealed to a higher court. My book begins with the U.S. Supreme Court ruling that there is definitely no such person as Santa Claus. I simply picked up where "Miracle" left off.

Who inspired the character Holly, the book's teenage protagonist?

I've always been drawn to stories that pit the little guy against the powers that be. Characters in movies like *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* and *It's a Wonderful Life* emphasize self-sacrifice for the greater good. I wrote Holly to project that same fearlessness. She expresses that kind of heroism we don't see much of anymore -- the kind where you confront evil without using your fists.

Why target a young-adult audience?

I had already written a series of books for young adults, featuring teens who stand up to authority. Then the *March For Our Lives* movement took off. Watching those millions of kids marching on Washington told me I was on the right path. I started attending their rallies, and quickly realized how vitally important youth activism is.

What sets your book apart from other YA fiction?

Generally, my books explore relevant topics through storytelling. They take a hard look at today's pressing issues, though never at the expense of a fun read. *An Unacceptable Christmas* follows in that vein. It provides an escape, but not into an unfamiliar world. You might call it a getaway into reality. But most importantly, it promotes empathy and optimism. Broad-minded young adults, in search of alternative YA fiction, will find it refreshing.

What do you hope readers will take away from this book?

Don't accept that the way things are is the way it has to be. Listen to your heart and use your head. Discover your better self, then prepare to feel that spark, that moment of euphoria when you say to yourself, "Hell, yes! I can do this!"