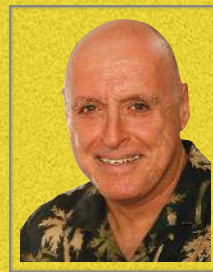


THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



332 When Everybody Gets It Wrong

Some days I look at the stories that come across the news and I'll admit it, I'm confused by how many people — including supposedly intelligent people — can get something so very wrong. I'm Jerry Roberts and today, we talk about minor league baseball and striking out in every way possible, on The Extra Point.

Memorial Day, 2019. This was a day to honor those who had paid the ultimate price for the freedom you and I enjoy under the American flag. Life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness, freedom from oppression, freedom of speech.

In Fresno, California, the local minor league baseball team, the Grizzlies, ran a video for Memorial Day attendees, a patriotic video that has been used in year's past. However, the video had been re-edited. This time, New York congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez was sandwiched between dictators Kim Jong-un of North Korea and Cuba's Fidel Castro, while the voice of President Ronald Reagan spoke about the "enemies of freedom" and "potential adversaries." Social media exploded.

Team president Derek Franks issued an apology, calling it an "oversight." There were calls for sponsors to boycott the team, plus somebody terminated, which is the way all of these things go these days. It's wrong. All of it is wrong. Everybody involved is wrong.

Let's start with the employee. Franks said he wouldn't identify the worker who created the video and that there would be no termination. That's wrong. He should have been fired. Maybe it was done as a joke and the worker didn't think it would be used. Maybe it was intentional that it would play. In any case, the employer was damaged because of his action, and that's the kind of thing that gets you fired.

Look, half the country probably would agree that Ocasio-Cortez's ideas are dangerous. Even

a big slice of Democrats want to see party leaders calm her down, as they view her as a threat to their chances in the 2020 election. Still, on this day it should have been only about baseball and those people we honor on the sacred holiday — not about politics.

Sponsors feel the heat in these moments and usually fold quickly. Sun Maid quit, as did Dos Equis and Tecate beers. Maybe they'll be back at some point, but likely not soon. Companies are free to spend their money as they wish and I understand their tough position, but the message sent is a bad one. It says, "Even though the team was blindsided by the video, we're going to cave to the pressure and punish them anyway." How about, "The Grizzlies were taken by surprise by the actions of an employee. They, along with us, don't agree with the negative message. They've been a good corporate citizen and we support them as they work through this issue." Sure.

And the people pushing for the sponsors to pull out and the employee to be fired are also in the wrong. Memorial Day honors those who protected with their life the right of people to say things we don't agree with, even horrible and hateful things. The Constitution guarantees it. I remember a day when we responded to the ideas we found disagreeable, denouncing and exposing them. Now, all we want to do is shout them down, censor what we don't like and scream for boycotts. Never mind about freedom of speech. Never mind about why we have it.

That's The Extra Point. Get out there and make something good happen today. For 93.3 and the Ray Gibson Show, I'm Jerry Roberts.

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