

# THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



## # 614 Tolerance and Intolerance – Deciding Who We Are

How free is free speech? Where is the line that separates tolerance and intolerance. I'm Jerry Roberts and today, we need to confront basic values and fairness, on The Extra Point.

Several days ago, Robert Unanue, the CEO of New Jersey-based Goya Foods, was invited to speak at the White House for President Trump's Hispanic Prosperity Initiative, an executive order to bolster education and economic opportunities for Hispanic Americans.

Unanue set off a massive firestorm of protest when he praised the president. Unanue referred to Trump as a builder, saying America was blessed to have a leader like him. It was a passing comment as he referred to his grandfather, the company founder.

Immediately, the mainstream media and social media exploded in anger. Politicians, celebrities, labor leaders, talking heads, and Hispanics across the country strongly criticized Unanue's words. But it didn't stop there. They screamed for a total boycott of Goya products. This is as wrong as wrong can be on several counts.

1. What about that free speech? Unanue said something nice about Trump and they want his company to be run out of business? What happened to disagreeing with someone and letting them know you don't like their positions, then exchanging ideas and maybe even arguing — then shaking hands and agreeing to disagree? That's how I grew up. Trying to put somebody out of business because you don't like someone they praise? In what screwed up universe is that what America is about?

2. Unanue had previously been invited to the White House by the Obama Administration during Hispanic Heritage Month, and he said nice things about President Obama. Conservatives didn't order a boycott. Why not? How dare he praise Obama? Shouldn't someone have put him out of business?

Unanue said, "When you're called by the president of the United States — you're gonna say, 'no I'm sorry I'm busy, no thank you?' I didn't say that to the Obamas and I didn't say that to President Trump."

3. Goya has a history of philanthropy. They've been good corporate citizens for a long time, stepping up to help others during their 84-year history. This spring alone, Goya donated over 300,000 pounds of food, or about 270,000 meals, to food banks and other organizations as part of its pandemic relief effort.

Unanue answered his critics: "So, you're allowed to talk good or to praise one president, but you're not allowed to aid in economic and educational prosperity? You make a positive comment and suddenly, it is not acceptable?"

4. What is so confusing about this is that many of the people who are so intolerant of Unanue and called for the Goya boycott, are the very people who demand that others be tolerant of their views. A lot of people in America scream about wanting their rights protected, or to gain more rights.

They know better than anyone what it feels like to be treated in ways that are or feel unfair. I would think that — because of their struggles — they would stand up and defend Unanue. But no, they want him out of business over praising Donald Trump. The hypocrisy is deep. There is only one way to see things...their way. Their tolerance has disintegrated into the murky, foul-smelling intolerant river of partisan politics.

Where were the Hispanic leaders who should have stood up and said, "I'm disappointed by the words spoken by Mr. Unanue, but he and Goya have done well by all of us over the years, they still help, and I appreciate their contributions." Where was that?

(Con't.)

And where was business? Even if they feel Goya got a raw deal, few American companies and their CEOs came to their defense. Most of the support has come from conservative sources, and it has been impressive.

The effort to defeat the boycott took off immediately. Goya products began to fly off the shelves across the country.

People who had never heard of the brand or even used the items Goya sells, were buying just to support Unanue and his stand.

I saw a Facebook post that showed a sign at one store that limited purchases to two Goya items only, because the demand had greatly increased. It was a welcome gift to Goya, but more it was a blow against intolerance.

America is at a crossroads. There are people who clearly intend to tear down anything they don't like and for any reason they don't like it. When offended they want to cancel out anything and anyone standing in opposition to their beliefs. It's a concept that itself must be canceled out.

Thank God you and I live in a place where a business person can freely show support for and give praise to an elected leader — who may represent opposite opinions from their own — without worrying about picket signs in front of their operation the next day, or someone organizing a boycott of their company.

Oh, we bark at each other over our various beliefs and the way we feel things should go around here, but then we can break bread together, and be civil.

Even after a big disagreement with someone, we still make sure they grab a plate and get fed. That's the Guam way.

Let us never forget it.

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

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