

KINS COMMUNITY COMMENT (442-5744)

This is Ron Pierre for Community Comment.

During the Christmas season, I can't help but reflect on 2013. Every year the spirit of this special season is manifested with stories about some of the good things people do with their lives. Two stories particularly lifted my spirits. One was the story about the girl in Oregon wanting to sell mistletoe on the street corner in order to pay for her braces. The young lady was told by authorities that she could not sell mistletoe on the street, but she could beg for money and that was okay. Imagine being told you can't show personal initiative to earn money, but instead it is better to beg for money. This 11-year old did not want a hand out. She wanted to pay her own way. The bureaucratic answer caused her to change the dynamics of the situation. She didn't quit and she didn't accept the "okay to beg" answer. Her solution was to take personal responsibility. She changed the sales plan and began selling packaged mistletoe in small boxes nationwide. She hired people to help her, marketed her product and started a little business. She has turned enough profit to purchase her own braces, but to also buy braces for one of her friends. When I hear of a story like this I see a positive dynamic that gives me confidence that the entrepreneurial spirit is still alive in America and some young people think beyond a handout. Moreover, some authority figure telling a young person that it is okay to take a handout but not to use their personal resourcefulness is most disgraceful.

Contrast this story with the numerous sights of those individuals who are permanent fixtures on Eureka's streets with cardboard signs or the people who confronts you on the street and asks if you have any spare change. I see the same people with the same signs in the same places all over town. Frankly, I never have any spare change. I need my spare change to order mistletoe of the 11 year old.

This Christmas season, I am particularly sensitive about giving. I am putting my gift-giving dollars to military and veteran-related organizations supporting military families and wounded veterans. The current government bureaucracy has long-since relinquished its veterans mission. More and more veterans are relying instead on volunteer groups and other organizations to provide efficient and effective services.

I look back at the recent government shutdown and replay the scenes of the government workers erecting barricades at the World War II memorial. The most memorable sights I recall were of the veterans and groups of citizen volunteers tearing down the barricades that had been placed around the memorials. Watching citizens remove the physical symbols of misplaced authority, took me back to the very founding of this country. I remember too the anger the families of fallen combatant casualties who were not being support by the government during the return of the remains of their family members to the United States.

There is a time and a place to stand against over-reaching public authority. Whether it's selling mistletoe in Portland or tearing down a barricade around a public memorial. American's know when defiance is the right choice..

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