



Looking Outward

Dan Glode
Columnist

We're in this together

Service to others is the payment you make for your space here on earth.

— Muhammad Ali

Some friends were visiting us in Sisters recently and we took them up to McKenzie Pass and walked up the observatory there. We have been there several times, and I was again impressed with how that observatory was built during the Great Depression.

Teenagers, young adults and others worked for a small wage and built a thing of beauty. Our country has several such examples of that era. Go to any National Park or Monument in existence during that period and you will see the

legacy of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). Talk to any of the parents of people my age and their stories are, or were, full of anecdotes about working in the forest or on trails or bridges and working and living in camps together.

They didn't make a lot of money, but they did send most of it home to help out. I have never met anyone who participated who did not think it was a life-changing experience. It wasn't mandatory, but close, as times were hard and it was a way to make a living.

When my boys were growing up I told them how lucky they were by the accident of where they were born. They were born in a place where they have many, many benefits not bestowed on the overwhelmingly vast number of people on this planet.

They were born in a Western democracy and have been afforded the privileges that come with the accident of their birth. They have an education, they can read, they will not die of common contagious diseases, they had a roof over their heads with plenty to eat, they can speak their minds without fear of retribution, they have employment opportunities,

water to drink, decent medical care, they have a life expectancy double most people and there is no one forcing them at gunpoint to do one thing or another.

I know I am going to anger some of my libertarian friends but I think mandatory national service is something that should be considered. I don't know all the details for such service but in my mind a year (or two) after high school should be a year (or two) of some kind of expected national service. It could be military service or some kind of domestic program which benefits the larger society.

If you don't want to wear a uniform you could help those in need in the hollows of West Virginia, build trails in our national parks, deliver meals on wheels, read to the bedridden, teach poor kids to read, tutor, construct, etc. It would be expected of all that could perform some duty and, yes, exceptions could be made if necessary.

I know the arguments against mandatory service: no one likes mandatory anything as we live in a free society where we have the right to choose, this is tantamount to slavery and so on. Slavery? There are places on this planet where you can

experience real slavery and exploitation and this is not one of them. Not anymore. Mercifully you were not born in one of those places.

In the 2012 national election only 54 percent of registered voters actually voted. That angered me. Those that preceded us left their bodies on the beaches of Normandy, the fields of Gettysburg, Bunker Hill, steets of Birmingham and many places near and far to secure our freedoms, our rights. We all have benefited from others who have done the real heavy lifting, and in spite of that almost half of those who can vote actually do so. Talk about taking things for granted! We are too self-indulged and self-absorbed. We need everyone

to put some skin in the game.

I think we need a shared commonality of purpose. We owe something to all those around us. I would hope this would be a shared value and one we want to pass on to our kids.

Did you ever talk to someone who had worked in Vista or the Peace Corps? They all thought of it as a life-changing experience. People have to appreciate we are part of a much larger society and we have to shoulder the responsibility for all of our welfare.

We are in this together. It would certainly help our country and most of all it would help those who participate feel good about themselves and the country they share.

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