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Uncommon Sense

Providing Clarity, Promoting Intelligence

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Issue: # 002

April 23, 2011

Greetings!

So we now have our 2nd issue of Uncommon Sense. The first of two weeks ago was a mere dress rehearsal! Carefully review the content of this issue. It could change your life for the better.

Once again I urge you to forward this email to any of your contacts you believe would benefit from this eZine, and encourage them to subscribe.

Oh, and have a blessed Easter Sunday!

Warm regards,

Ara Norwood

Reinvent Yourself

I've been doing a fair amount of reading about the life of our 40th president, Ronald Reagan. It's been interesting on many levels. One of the notable things about Reagan is that so many of my associates have strong opinions of him (not all of them flattering) and yet the opinions are all over the place. One friend of mine who lives in San Francisco sums up Reagan's life with the simplistic explanation: he was an actor.



Translation: he was a phony. Other luminaries such as leadership expert Warren Bennis label Reagan as "selfish." The highly respected social critic Neil Postman calls Reagan "a radical." Political pundit Clark Clifford referred to Reagan

as an "amiable dunce."

One thing that interests me about Reagan, among many things, was his ability to reinvent himself. His first job found him as a lifeguard. Next, he found himself as a radio sports announcer. Then he became a spokesman for General Electric and was an accomplished and polished public speaker. Eventually he became an actor. Then president of the Screen Actor's Guild, then California's Governor for two terms, then a political radio commentator, then President of the United States for two terms, then finally a private citizen.

It is evident that when Reagan was doing his work for General Electric, it never occurred to him that one day he would be President of the United States. And in fact, he did not move his career in a direction that would suggest strong political ambitions, as he next became an actor. Yet Reagan reinvented himself, not once, but several times.

This is something that each of us can do. And some of us *must* do.

We are not bound by our current roles, reputations, or station in life. We are not bound by our current careers or the industries we work in. We are not obligated to maintain the circle of friends we have at this time.

If you are content with where your life has brought you, chances are you are very lucky. Just keep on keepin' on. If, however, you long for a different pasture, recognize you have the power within you to abandon your current path and traverse a new one. It all starts with making a decision, and committing to that decision. Note that I am not encouraging things like divorcing your spouse or abandoning your children. I am, however, encouraging you to recognize that an Administrative Assistant need not remain an Administrative Assistant all her working life if she hungers for a different kind of role in her career. She can become a Corporate Trainer if that is what interests her. But she must reinvent herself in order to complete that transition.

I recommend that such a person first make the decision to see herself in the new role, then *commit* to herself that come what may, she is going to pursue her new role until she acquires it. I would further advise such a person to not only see herself as a Corporate Trainer, but to think of herself as a Corporate Trainer, to read what Corporate Trainers read, and to identify herself as a budding Corporate Trainer when others ask her what she does for a living. She may not actually be in that exact role at the time, but that is *who she is* and until she believes that and maintains that as a statement of belief, she won't likely get there.

If you have aspirations to become something you are not currently - a painter, an archer, a comedian, a mathematician, or an optometrist - recognize that you have within you the power to transform your life. You can reinvent yourself.

The New Protected Constituency

Kobe Bryant and the Question of Free Speech

On April 12th, the Los Angeles Lakers were up against the San Antonio Spurs. During the game, Kobe Bryant of the Lakers was charged with a technical foul. After he walked over to the Laker bench, Bryant was seen mouthing the words "F___ing faggot!" in the direction of referee Bennie Adams who had issued the foul.



The next day, NBA Commissioner David Stern announced that he had fined Mr. Bryant \$100,000 for using the word "faggot". Said Mr. Stern: "Kobe and everyone associated with the NBA know that insensitive or derogatory comments are not acceptable and have no place in our game or society."

I have some questions. But first, I want to make sure my position on Kobe's language is crystal clear:

- Kobe should have exercised more self-control.
- Kobe should have been a better sport.
- Kobe should have shown respect towards the position of authority held by the referee.
- Kobe should not have used profanity (the first "F-word").
- Kobe should not have used vulgarity (the second "F-word").

Now, with those qualifiers spelled out, I need to ask the following:

- Is a \$100,000 fine by the NBA, as I suspect, considered substantial? Is the amount of money something that is meant to be so severe an amount as to deter any future NBA athlete from uttering that term?
- Is Kobe being fined because he said the offensive words *to a referee*? Or would he have been fined had he said the same words to his coach, an opposing player, a fan, or a camera-man? What if he had said it to no one in particular, just sort of floated it out there? What if he had said it clearly in a humorous vein, while joking around with someone on his team in a playful moment?

I put a call into Tim Frank, Senior Vice President of Communications for the NBA. He graciously returned my call. I learned that Kobe was not fined for insulting a referee and Kobe was not fined for using the "F-word". He was fined for uttering the word "faggot" and it would not have mattered who he had said it to. It became clear in my conversation with Mr. Frank that while profanity might be tolerated, gay slurs are not. He also confirmed my suspicion: a \$100,000 direct fine is the highest and most severe fine an NBA player can receive.

Again, I want to make it clear that I am not happy when anyone uses demeaning language to insult or offend anyone. I consider language a gift from God and I want people to use it in its elevated

forms, not its lowest forms. Further, I expect people to treat each other with decency, graciousness, and dignity. Having said that, it seems to me that the gay rights constituency has scored a major victory for their cause by seeing Kobe fined a six-figure amount for uttering that one word. It is especially telling considering that Kobe Bryant is not anti-gay in any meaningful sense, and the referee involved is not gay either. This was clearly a case, as Kobe himself has said, of an angry outburst in the heat of the moment, and not something that was directed at the gay community. However, that makes no difference to the gay rights activists who contacted the NBA prior to their ruling against Kobe.

The gay rights agenda does not stop at censoring certain words and severely punishing those who use such words. California State Senator Mark Leno of San Francisco, an openly gay man, has introduced a bill that was approved by the California Senate - one day after the Kobe Bryant outburst. The bill would make it mandatory that all future social studies lessons taught in California public schools include the contributions of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons to American society and society at large. Essentially the bill makes it mandatory to teach what is being dubbed "gay history." This would be effective beginning the 2013-14 school year. I'm not clear myself on what unique and valuable contributions have been made to society by transgendered individuals, but it's possible I've just missed it. I also wonder why it is that gay activists are so bent on having the sexual orientation of achievers proclaimed -- if they happen to be gay, lesbian, bisexual, etc. Why does the sexual orientation of such persons get such a marquee billing, while the actual accomplishments of such persons seem secondary? I don't recall seeing a similar trend with respect to heterosexuals who accomplish things (i.e., "Tom Cruise, a heterosexual, will be starring in a new movie being produced by Sony Pictures," or "Mark Zuckerberg, a heterosexual, and founder of Facebook, announced a new security system for the popular social networking site.")

But the gay community has come a long way.

Many of today's sit-coms on television feature gay characters, often showing men passionately kissing other men, during prime time programming. One of the most popular shows among teenagers is *Glee*, which features young people with enormous musical talent, snappy humor, inspiring themes of conquering one's fears, and where the innocent victim is almost always gay, and the villain is almost always a gay-basher. It's a well-written piece of programming that has enormous power in influencing the values of the rising generation.

Is this a good thing?

I'd be interested in hearing from those who consider such developments a welcome change, as well as from those who see something very troubling about this trend.

From Ara's Journal

There is someone in my life that is very close to me. I've known him longer than almost any of my other friends. I've admired him as I've watched him marry a beautiful and capable woman, raise a family, enjoy substantial wealth and career success, and seem to lead the near-perfect life.



And yet, now 20+ years later, it's a very different picture. Divorce proceedings are underway. The career and its perks have imploded to zero. Three lovely properties are now on the market to be sold at a loss. The lawyers are draining the estate. And jail time may be in his future.

Sometimes we make a fateful mistake which can snowball into a long train of bad luck. Sometimes, some of the fallout from that one mistake is patently unfair. But that's life. Life truly is not always fair. Life's circumstances can be mighty cruel.

My advice, with the above story in mind, is simple:

- Do not touch liquor or illegal drugs of any kind.
- Do have the humility to get help when you need help.
- Allow God into your life through prayer - and pray during the good times and not only when the crises arise.
- Make supporting your spouse one of your highest priorities - even when it is difficult to do so.
- Be true to your values.

What is telling is that the specific story and the people involved are not unique. Their precise details may be unique, but as I write this I am recalling a number of other lives that have been destroyed or seriously derailed by the same types of problems, and their numbers are not few.

Life can be tough enough as it is. We must remember that sometimes one misstep is all it takes to start us down a path that will be very difficult, if not impossible, to recover from.

The World of Words

Building Your Power of Expression

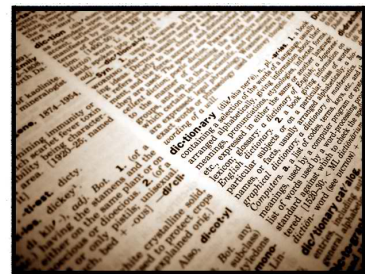
Visceral, adj

Pronunciation: 'vis(ə)rəl

Meaning: This is a very expressive word and it refers to one's deep, primal feelings (as opposed to ones intellect).

Usage:

- *I read the report and experienced a very negative, visceral reaction to it.*
- *Her fears upon hearing the news were deep, poignant, and visceral.*
- *Reagan's sunny disposition and zest for life impacted me in a very profound and visceral way and was something I could resonate with.*



Subscribers, the Special Report "11 Ways to Beat the Odds" is now complete and has been sent out. If you have not received it, please communicate that to me via email (ara@aranorwood.com).

For more information on my work, follow me on Twitter ("Ara Norwood"), or on Facebook (keyword "Leadership Development Systems") or via my website: www.aranorwood.com

Sincerely,

Ara Norwood
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