

Uncommon Sense

Providing Clarity, Promoting Intelligence

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Issue: # 051

May 15, 2013

Greetings!

Time marches on. The seasons may change, but as the weeks repeat themselves, we often see the same old patterns repeating themselves as well. As we get older, life sometimes has a familiarity, or even a sameness to it. That is neither good nor bad, it just is.

But sometimes you find your world turned upside down by the events of the times. Again, this is not necessarily good or necessarily bad, but it can be life-changing.

My hope is that this issue of *Uncommon Sense*, my fifty-first, will get you thinking and acting in new directions. Feel free to drop me a line and give me your candid feedback after reading this issue. Also, feel free to forward it on to anyone in your "rolodex" who might benefit from any of the content included in this issue -- or share on your favorite social networking site by clicking on one of the buttons above.

OK, let's get started.

Warm regards,

Ara Norwood



Self-Development

Launching Your Blog

Some years ago I had the pleasure of working with a young man in Chicago named Curtis. We had a productive time doing difficult work that we both enjoyed. 32 years later, we still correspond on occasion. Recently, Curtis asked me about blogging, something I'm doing more and

more of. I offer my thoughts in this forum, both to Curtis, and to all my readers.

In this day and age it makes perfect sense for you (yes, I mean *you*) to launch a blog. A blog gives you a forum to communicate your views to the masses. A blog thrusts you into a leadership role, a thought-leadership role, because you gain followers who opt in to read your blog. A blog is the ultimate leveler in that it puts you on a level playing field and allows you to publish your words just like anyone else - democracy at its finest.



Here are some quick tips about blogging:

- Give some thought as to what your blog is about. The more focused it is, the better. If you are writing about a broad topic such as cooking, try to focus on some aspect of cooking -- perhaps spicy food, breads and pastries, or exotic seafood. The more precise you are, the more you are likely to attract readers who find your topic of interest.
- Don't worry about running out of things to write about; that would no more happen than would you run out of things to talk about with all the people you converse with. You may have some dry spells, but you will get through them. (Tip: one way to avoid dry spells is to keep a running log of possible blog topics which you jot down somewhere as you think of them.)
- Blogging does not particularly lend itself to formal or elegant language. So don't fret over getting the language picture-perfect. It should be clear and understandable, and there should not be any typos, but is not meant to read like Chaucer or Emerson.
- Write often. Perhaps once a week at a minimum. Some blog daily; many blog 2 to 3 times a week. The more you blog, the faster your following will grow.
- OK, as far as mechanics go, if you want to get

started fast, there are plenty of free sites you can use. Many beginners start out by setting up a free blog [at Yahoo](#). Others set up their blog on their own website (which is my preferred M.O.) But don't let the mechanics slow you down. Find a home for your blog and launch it.

- If you are curious about the length of a given blog post, check out other blogs and try to get an idea of how lengthy they are, then mirror that. I find that most blog posts are less than 500 words. Some are less than 300. These are not meant to be long tomes.

Finally, don't see blogging as something you "have to" do, but as something you "choose to" do. That mindset will make blogging fun and enjoyable.

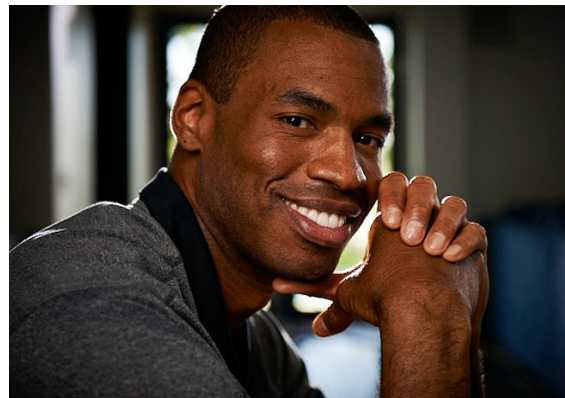
Now get going!

(Note: to learn more about blogs and the trends associated with them, [click here](#).)

The Elephant in the Room The New Badge of Honor: Announcing That You're Gay

On April 29th, I came home late from a long day in time to catch the 11:00 News. One of the major stories of that evening was a very lengthy feature concerning an NBA basketball player by the name of Jason Collins. If you

didn't know what the hoopla was all about, you would have thought that Mr. Collins (seen to the right) had accomplished some unheard of feat. After all, his "accomplishment"



resulted in a congratulatory phone call from the President of the United States, as well as a former U.S. President, both Democrats. It also netted him an interview with George Stephanopoulos. Further, it put him on the cover of *Sports Illustrated*. And the story had so much traction that I was still hearing about it 3 full days later on radio news stations.

So what was this incredible triumph that Mr. Collins pulled off? Did he score 200 points in a single game? Did he sink 75 consecutive free-throws? Did he rescue a drowning child? No, it was far more monumental than that. Mr. Collins had announced to the world that he is a gay man.

One of the most fascinating things to come out of this revelation was the notion that Mr. Collins was called "courageous" for telling the world he finds men, rather than women, sexually attractive. Jay Carney, the White House Press Secretary (who serves as the public voice of the Obama Administration) said, "Here at the White House we view that as another example of the progress that has been made and the evolution that has been taking place in this country, and commend [Collins] for his courage."

Commend him for his courage?

In today's political climate, where, as of this writing, a dozen states have legalized same-sex marriage, does it really qualify as courage to announce that you are gay?

Which would take more courage: to announce to the world that you are gay, or to respond to such an announcement by calling homosexuality a sin?

Chris Broussard, a reporter for ESPN did exactly that and was reprimanded for doing so. First was [a statement](#) by ESPN: "We regret that a respectful discussion of personal viewpoints became a distraction from today's news. ESPN is fully committed to diversity and welcomes Jason Collins' announcement." Allow me to translate that: ESPN is *not* fully committed to diversity, for if they were, they would have welcomed both Collins for his views which promote homosexuality, and Broussard for his contrarian views. Instead, ESPN demonstrated they are fully committed to supporting the gay agenda but not at all committed to traditional Christian viewpoints. They welcomed Jason Collins' announcement and they spit on Chris Broussard's statement. That's not a commitment to diversity. Nor is it a commitment to one of their own employees.

But that wasn't enough. John Skipper, ESPN President, came out with [a statement](#) of his own: "I think we did great other than we made one mistake: The mistake was not being more careful with Chris Broussard. . . [Broussard] made personal comments which was a

mistake."

So let me get this straight [pun intended]: Jason Collins made a personal comment, and that was welcomed as heroic, while Chris Broussard also made a personal comment, but that was "a mistake." In other words, according to the leadership of ESPN, it is perfectly acceptable to make personal comments about the most private of matters (one's sexual preference) but the moment someone has the temerity to offer a counter view, then all bets are off on personal comments. Personal comments are welcomed if they are Leftist or "progressive," but they are not to be condoned if they represent traditional Christian values.

And that, my friends, is the latest elephant in the room.

Shameless Plug

Birthday Log

I have figured out how to remember the birthdays of people who are important to me. I developed a simple spreadsheet that you may find useful.

Whether it's a family member, a friend, a work associate, or some other important relationship, I regularly acknowledge the birthdays of close to 100 people each year. And I think it really makes a difference, because when you remember someone's birthday, it's the ultimate expression of your appreciation of them as people.

Sometimes I'm one of the very few who remembered.

For those of you who would like to adopt the system I use for remembering the birthdays of key people in your life, I will save you the headache of trying to reinvent the wheel by offering my own system for the embarrassingly small fee of \$3.00.

If you want it, [click here](#), pay the \$3.00 using your credit or debit card, then you can download the tool. I actually provide you with two of them: one is a sample providing a sort of visual tutorial on how I use it (with fictitious names) and the other is your master copy to use any way you wish.

Would this help you get organized so you can begin

strengthening your key relationships?

Then what are you waiting for?! [Click here](#) and make it happen!

From Ara's Journal **A Quick Note on Laughter**

Laughter is one of the most peculiar and interesting responses humans engage in. I mean that very literally.

There are so many different kinds of laughter. Sometimes laughter is used as a sign of disdain or mockery. In those instances, one is laughing at another as a show of ridicule. Not a pleasant experience for either party.

Sometimes we see nervous laughter, where the laughing itself is forced, and is used to mask a contrary sentiment - perhaps fear. Similarly, we sometimes see others laugh when in fact they are quite angry; the laughter in this case is masking real fury.

Then there is the courtesy laugh, where one laughs out of a sense of obligation, or to placate others who seem to be expecting a response of this kind. The person doing the laughing does not actually feel the emotion of humor, therefore it is forced laughter, and it's utterly phony. I suspect we've all done this (and, I admit, there are certain scenarios where I am pretty good at it.)

And we all know of individuals who seem to be prone to laughter. They laugh all the time, even when it is inappropriate to do so, and they tend to overdo it. They are kind of unstable, perhaps a little silly, but their default response to most situations is laughter. This is empty. And obnoxious.

But putting all of that aside, laughter can be very good medicine in the right doses. It feels good to laugh. I am told that laughter releases something in the brain known as endorphins, a chemical that puts us in a productive state. I notice also that when I am a student in a learning environment, such as a workshop, a seminar, a debriefing,



or a formal class, if the presenter (be they a professor, facilitator, or professional speaker) gets me to laugh, I tend to be more open to the ideas being presented. I tend to listen better. I tend to want to be engaged. I suspect that is true for most people. Laughter tends to draw people in.

I began by noting the peculiarity of laughter. It's ponderous to reflect on why we laugh. What is it about the human species that enables us to respond with this phenomenon we call laughter? Why do we laugh? How does it come about? Are we the only life forms that laugh? (Emerson wrote poetically that the earth laughs in flowers.) It's not the normal state of our being. Is it a coping mechanism to balance out the more tragic dimensions of the human condition?

Whatever the source, whatever the purpose, I suspect there is something healthy about laughter, provided it doesn't dominate our lives and crowd out other very necessary emotions, including sadness, curiosity, determination, and longing. Such attributes, taken together, combine to make us truly human.

The World of Words

Eviscerate

Building Your Power of Expression

Eviscerate, v.

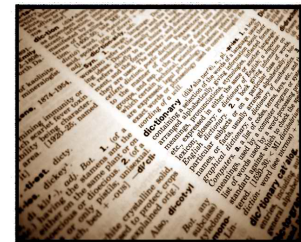
Pronunciation: i'visə,rāt

Meaning:

This strong and elegant word originally meant "remove" as in "remove an organ" or something along those lines, but has come to mean slicing and dicing something, such as an argument or a position someone takes.

Usage:

- *I lost that debate, owing in part to my lack of preparation, not to mention that my opponent simply eviscerated my arguments.*



- *We took the movie, eviscerated the foul language, and thus made it more family-friendly.*
- *During your oral defense of your dissertation, do not show any signs of uncertainty or the faculty will eviscerate you.*

New subscribers, the Special Report "11 Ways to Beat the Odds" should have been sent out to you already. 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
Leadership Development Systems