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# Uncommon Sense

Providing Clarity, Promoting Intelligence

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Issue: # 067

January 15, 2014

## Greetings!

The new year is here. I hope you have set some lofty goals for yourself in 2014.

I certainly have, which is why I am galvanized to get up every day and make things happen. One of those is to provide you with good solid content and commentary all year long.

OK, let's get started.



Warm regards,

Ara Norwood

## Self-Development

### The Foundation of Leadership

The foundational characteristic of great leaders, and in fact, a prerequisite of great leadership, is the ability to *think* effectively.

That may strike some of you as odd, since most pontificators of what makes a great leader focus on many other elements such as vision or empowerment or charisma, etc.

Those things are fine and some of them even necessary, but none of them are foundational.

What is foundational is the act of *thinking*.

All great leadership initiatives find their birth in the mind and thought processes of the leader. And while it is possible for the revelatory flash of brilliance to, like lightning, strike the consciousness of the leader, it does so only occasionally.

Conversely, forward-thinking leaders recognize that their brilliance and purpose is born of deliberative thinking - the act of consciously and intentionally



engaging in willful use of the mind - pondering the unconventional, thinking outside of the box, and purposefully, of their own volition, using the brain to make sense of the world around them.

The brain is a marvelous yet mysterious organ, a complex network of neural connections which give place for imagination, memory, consciousness, and intelligence. All of the thoughts we've ever conceived, all of the experiences of our past, everything we've read, dreamt, heard, or seen, is stored within the brain, which is why it is important that we fill it with wisdom and intelligence (think great books) and avoid filling it with drivel (think MTV, the Bachelor, etc.) The process we call *thought* enables us to combine relevant impressions that are stored there into a wonderful synthesis that is highly creative in its potential to solve problems, realize solutions, and reach new levels of resourcefulness and ingenuity.

The result can be a veritable symphony of brilliance!

All of the great leaders of the past, from Edison and Einstein, to Kennedy and King, to Chavez and Columbus, to Harriet Tubman and Margaret Thatcher, have put much stock in the process of thinking. Indeed, had these luminaries of the past been flaccid thinkers, they would not likely have ever made the history they did.

One of the challenges that befuddles many would-be leaders in our day lies in the very nature of *our day*. We live in an age of such fast-paced madness - a condition that would have baffled and mesmerized people who lived, say, four generations ago - that everyday life makes us prone to a reactive posture, rushing from one crisis to

another, one seemingly urgent task to the next, without time for reflection.

The anecdote to this condition isn't complicated. We simply need to muster the courage to schedule thinking time, just as much as we schedule anything else we do.

Here are your marching orders if you would be an effective leader: regularly schedule some alone time to simply *think*. It matters less what the agenda is that you think about. What matters more is that you get into the habit of regularly shutting off your smart phone, closing the door to your office, and giving yourself some uninterrupted time for allowing your brain to work its magic. As you do this consistently, you will find yourself being equipped for transformational leadership opportunities.

There is more to leadership than simply taking time to think. Much more. I will explore some additional elements of effective leadership in the next several issues of *Uncommon Sense*. But it all starts with the habit of thinking.

## **The Elephant In The Room Being on the "Right Side" of History**

In our topsy-turvy world, where much moral confusion reigns, we hear a lot of trendy phrases tossed about in the marketplace of ideas.

I've recently heard a lot of "Just saying. . ." at the end of a potentially unwelcomed contribution to a conversation. The phrase is supposed to exonerate the person from criticism and hopefully enable the rest of us to give serious consideration to the blather that just came out of his or her mouth.

But here is one that I find both interesting and possibly harmful. The phrase is ". . .the right side of history." I've heard this stylish quip bandied about recently, most often to solidify a position, or cement an argument, as if the mere uttering of this phrase settles the matter and signals some sort of victory for the person who first manages to fire it off in the heat of the moment.

One of the more interesting examples of this phrase involved a dispute between the two adult daughters of former Vice President Dick Cheney. Liz Cheney (age 47), and her sister Mary Cheney (age 44), had a bit of a falling

out last November, when Mary, who is a lesbian and who is married to one Heather Poe, was livid that Liz took a position supporting traditional marriage. Outraged, Mary posted the following [on her Facebook Page](#) for all to see: "Liz - this isn't just an issue on which we disagree - you're just wrong - and on the wrong side of history."

And based on a quick scan of the comments people posted on her page, it appears that most have drunk the Kool-Aid and presumed that Mary had won the argument, after all, she said so herself.

But I think we need to understand what is really behind the idea of being on "the wrong side of history."

Mary Cheney and others who spout this phrase off have in mind the following: history = truth; history = correctness. Therefore, if you hold a position that is on the wrong side of history, you hold a false position, a flawed position, an out-of-date position, an incorrect position. Therefore you should discard your position and jump on the bandwagon with the rest of us enlightened, progressive souls.

In actuality, however, being on, in this case, what Mary Cheney and others confidently think of as the right side of history has no innate, intrinsic "correctness" at all. It merely means this is the trend of today. This is the new morality of today.

This is not hard to understand. If you wore Bell Bottom jeans in the mid-1960s, you were on the right side of history; if you wore them today, you would not be. If you danced the Macarena in the mid-1990s, you were on the right side of history for that dance. Not so much today.

While same-sex marriage is gaining popularity and acceptance among large segments of the population, something unheard of a generation ago - or at any previous

time in world history - that doesn't make it innately correct. Given that marriage has been a long-standing



union with its origins in the realm of the sacred, the only standard that counts here is what the will of God is on the matter, and

that will won't be found by voting on it, or by activist judges pronouncing their personal views on it, or by popular opinion supporting it.

In other words, Mary Cheney's blanket statement that she is simply "right" and that her sister Liz is simply "wrong" is nothing more than bald assertion. Today's trends do not determine morality. Only the Almighty can do that.

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

## **Shameless Plug** **Don't Put Your Audiences To Sleep**

### **Special Report**

A number of months ago I attended a seminar. It was awful.

The seminar leader, though quite accomplished in running several businesses, seemed to break every rule imaginable when it comes to making presentations. I wanted to get up and walk out, but then an idea struck me: Why not capture all the things he is doing wrong and write a paper spelling them out -- as well as what to do differently.

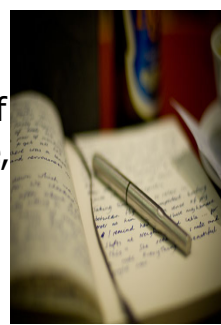


I wrote the paper. It's a Special Report and it's available on my website.

If you give presentations and you'd like to make sure you don't make some of the same mistakes as the presenter I endured, you can download solid information and advice for less than \$30. [Click Here](#) and add "How Not To Do It" to your Shopping Cart. It's easy and fast.

## **From Ara's Journal** **On Projection**

I had a very interesting experience today. I received a phone call from one of my business partners. We are in the process of launching an online business. She is single, in her early 50s, and a mother of two children. She is smart, capable, and gets things done. I partnered with her because she has know-how I lack, and vice-versa.



Ours is a classic *master-mind alliance*, and I have every reason to believe our business is going to do well.

Today she phoned me to share a phone conversation she had with a fellow whom she has known for several years. He considers himself a business coach of sorts and has served as an outside consultant to a previous business endeavor she once had a role in. He periodically calls her just to check in and keep the communication channels open.

When she informed him of our new business we are in the process of launching, he became very interested in knowing all he could of the matter. In fact, he asked for my name, did a quick Google search of me, and found my website. He then proceeded to pepper my partner with questions about me. After he gleaned enough data, he said to her that while he might be out of line in offering this advice, he needed to say it anyway. He told her to be very, very careful with me, inasmuch as there was a good chance my interests with her had nothing to do with business, but, in fact, the business was just a cover to hide my true intentions, which were sinister and salacious. She pointed out to him that this hardly seemed to be the case, as I am a happily married man with four children. He countered that none of that mattered, and that she needs to keep her guard up at all costs, as my motives may well be very, very dark. She could only smile.

As for me, I find it peculiar that a man who professes to be a business consultant would turn the conversation in such a direction. I honestly do not believe I've ever heard of a business person in a business relationship steer the topic into that territory and make such accusations about a person he knows virtually nothing about.

One can only ponder whether this is a classic case of *projection* - the Freudian notion whereby a person unconsciously ascribes his own undesirable attributes on to another, as when a rude individual assumes everyone around him is rude, or a bully imagines everyone else as

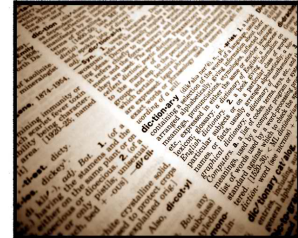
bullies.

I do agree with one thing he is alleged to have said to my business partner: he was out of line in offering such commentary. But I am glad he did, for now I know much more about him than he does about me.

## The World of Words

### Amalgamation

#### Building Your Power of Expression



**Amalgamation, n.**

**Pronunciation:** ə,malgə'māSHən

**Meaning:** This word refers to the process of combining various components into one whole. Think of it as a process of uniting of two or more entities.

#### Usage:

- *The amalgamation of U.S. Airways with American Airlines resulted in the largest airline in the world.*
- *The last thing we need is the amalgamation of the unions.*
- *We have seen the gradual amalgamation of the various banks resulting in fewer competitors.*

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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](mailto: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](http://www.aranorwood.com)

**Sincerely,**

Ara Norwood  
Leadership Development Systems