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Uncommon Sense

Providing Clarity, Promoting Intelligence

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Issue: # 071

March 11, 2014

Greetings!

Great to have you back.

Daylight Savings Time has returned, and like it or not, our days will remain lighter longer. Spring is less than two weeks away. And just as Spring is evocative of renewal, new beginnings, second chances, and growth, I have packed much content in this issue of *Uncommon Sense* that is meant to provide you with growth. So sink your teeth into this issue.



And one thing I hope you sense from my writings are that they are mostly "Preliminary Reports," meaning that while they often reflect substantial thought, they are not what I would call "publish-ready." But they could get that way with feedback, input, commentary, and criticism from you, my reader.

Always feel free to share your input and reactions to the things I write, whether you agree, disagree, or whatever your take is; I benefit immensely every time I hear from my readers.

OK, let's get started.

Warm regards,

Ara Norwood

The Core of Leadership

I return to the subject of leadership. I have recently written about the importance leaders put into the thinking process, the power of formulating the right questions, and the need to craft a compelling vision.

But there is more to leadership. At its core, leadership is about being a change-agent. The leader must find a way to translate that lofty vision into a robust action plan for change - solid, actionable change.

Reagan might have been just another nice fellow with a sunny disposition had not the Berlin Wall come tumbling down. Lincoln might have been not much more than a folksy teller of homespun, witty tales had not the Union prevailed in the Civil War and slavery became abolished. And Churchill might have been just another energetic PM had he not successfully rallied the West to defeat Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan. All three men were towering leaders due to their ability to change the world in which they operated.

Great leaders grasp the fact that change is the norm, and that while change is something that can be foisted on them, change is also something they can initiate. Yes, change happens, whether we like it or not. But being on the receiving end of the inevitable changes that come our way is only half the story; the other half is that leaders have the power to launch change efforts which move their lofty vision from the realm of the theoretical to



the real. They find a way to actualize their vision. And they do so while adapting to the new changes that are taking place around them. Thought-leader Eric Hoffer stated it brilliantly when he said, "In times of massive change, it is the learners who inherit the earth, while the learned stay elegantly tied to a world that no longer exists."

Is there a silver bullet that great leaders utilize? Yes. What is it? In a word, it is *empowerment*. Great leaders seem to consistently empower (that is, infuse power into the hearts and minds of their followers). John F. Kennedy did so with his declaration that the United States would put a man on the moon and bring him back safely to earth before the end of the decade of the 1960s. George C. Marshall did so when he galvanized the U.S. Government to effectively bring aid to war-torn Europe following World War II. And Martin Luther King did through the power of his oration and his Gandhi-like posture of non-violent resistance in striving for civil rights.

True leaders truly are change-agents, and they start with themselves. They recognize, as the always insightful Alvin Toffler has stated, that "Whatever it was that got you where you are today is not sufficient to keep you there," meaning that no one can rest on one's laurels for long. We get left behind if we are not constantly stretching, reaching, and striving.

So ask yourself what your desired future looks like. Develop a clear and compelling vision of that desired future. Then make a firm commitment that you will strive to bring that future about. Empower others with your bone-deep belief in that vision, and people will line up behind you to help you achieve it.

And that, my friends, is the heart of leadership.

The Elephant In The Room Politicizing the Non-Political

Recently President Obama hosted an event at the White House to honor the "Women of Soul," as the event was called. One of his tributes was to the great R&B vocalist Aretha Franklin, who's many hit songs include "Won't Be Long," "Chain of Fools," "Get It Right," and "Respect."

When the President was speaking of Ms. Franklin, he tried to say, "When Aretha first told us what R-E-S-P-E-C-T meant to her. . ." but he accidentally misspelled it as "R-S-P-E-C-T." Pretty much everyone present noticed the gaffe and had a good chuckle.

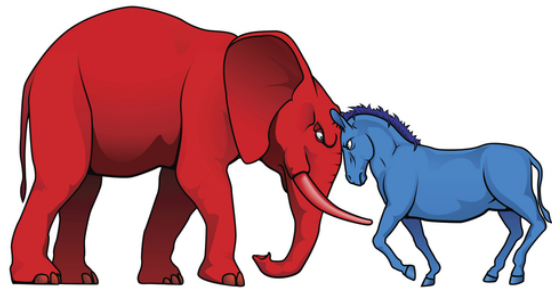
Now, . . . I use the above as an illustration for the following lesson: If someone were to now claim the president is

unfit for high office because he is too illiterate to spell correctly, that person would be guilty of politicizing an issue.

To politicize an issue is to take something that is not political and to attempt to score a political point with it. *The President goofed up the spelling of a word, therefore he is a bad leader, or he is illiterate, or he is unfit for office*, so the thinking would go. Notice there is no cutting him any slack. Notice that there is no acknowledgement that the man is human and probably gives many speeches each week and thus is bound to misspeak some of the time.

The politicizing of an issue is done simply for the purpose of saying

"Gotcha! Our politics are noble and yours are dangerous or foolish or both."



Now, granted, the person's politics may be dangerous or foolish or both, but if so, it is not necessarily connected to the issue that is being politicized.

We tend to demonize our political foes, often unfairly, and often during inappropriate moments. When a mass shooting took place in Colorado in July 2012, ABC News Correspondent Brian Ross inaccurately and inappropriately reported that the shooter was a member of the Tea Party. He was not. But the reason Brian Ross reported it that way was because Brian Ross is a man of the Left and he found out through slipshod research that the name of the shooter was also the same name as a man who was associated with the Tea Party in that area. Since Brian Ross disdains the Tea Party, he was all too happy to associate the Tea Party with the shooter regardless of whether truth would be compromised by doing so. (Mr. Ross later had to issue a formal apology, but the point had been scored and the damage had been done.)

Similarly, when a mentally deranged shooter went on a rampage in January 2011 in Arizona that killed 19 people and critically injured a Democratic Congresswoman, some Liberals politicized the tragedy, suggesting that Republicans were to blame because it is Republicans who love guns, not Democrats. Never mind that the shooter

was mentally ill, that he killed several Republicans, and was not a Republican himself. If one can use an apolitical tragedy to cast aspersions on one's political opponents, some will do just that.

But those who do, be they on the Left or on the Right of the political spectrum, are weak-minded shills, and fortunately, mature and wise people can usually see their agenda. And thus, it usually backfires on such people.

There are plenty of real political issues to discuss, debate, and dialogue about. Sound people of goodwill see no need to politicize the non-political, whether such things involve music, sports, science, or human tragedy.

* * * * *

As a sort of Post-Script to the above, my ear caught something after I wrote the content for this article. In an ironic revelation, I realized in reviewing the video of the event this article opened with, that President Obama himself politicized the Aretha Franklin song "Respect" by applying the song to the controversial issue of same-sex marriage, something that probably never occurred to Ms. Franklin when she composed the song. You can see the pertinent remarks by [clicking here](#) - at the 3:23 mark. The "code language" he used for this was as follows: "When Aretha first told us what R-S-P-E-C-T meant to her, she had no idea it would become a rallying cry for African Americans, and women, and then everyone who felt marginalized because of what they looked like *or who they loved*. They wanted some respect!"

That is a classic example of needless and nauseating pandering and politicization of an otherwise popular R&B song. And it goes without saying that the principles espoused in the song do not, in President Obama's mind, apply to those who oppose same-sex marriage, only those who are in favor of it.

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

Shameless Plug
Résumé Expertise. . . and more!

I'm not sure I understand what is going on in the job market right now, but lately, I have been called upon again and again to help various clients with their résumé. I

mean, one after the other, they almost seemed lined up. And they have been pleased with the results. For instance:

Susan S. of Santa Monica wrote:

I needed a better résumé, as the one I had just wasn't cutting it. The advice I got from Ara was simple, clear, and effective. The résumé I have now is something I am proud of showing, and really enabled me to speak to my strengths. Ara is the best!

Laura H. of Newport Beach wrote:

I was out of work for a while and things were getting desperate. After trying a variety of other career coaches, I finally turned to Ara for help with my résumé. The advice I received was indispensable, straight-forward, and easy to implement. As a result, I landed a really great job! I couldn't be happier with his services!

What's more, Laura H. has referred quite a few clients my way -- the ultimate sign of confidence.

As a result of all of this, I have formally formed a partnership which will be devoted to providing eBooks and consulting services covering four distinct career areas:



- Mapping Out the Right Career Path For You
- Crafting a Winning Résumé that Results in Interviews
- Networking Your Way to the Right Job Openings
- Job Interviews: Hitting It Out of the Park!

The eBooks will be on sale soon at our new website (details to be announced in the coming weeks.) And for those who prefer a little extra hand-holding, my personal consultative services will be available, however the eBooks will be less expensive.

More to come soon. Stay tuned. . .

From Ara's Journal

The Ultimate Question of Life

I had a lengthy telephone conversation the other day with a young friend of mine. I've watched this wonderful little girl grow up over the last quarter century, evolving from a toddler into a beautiful young woman in her late 20s, now married. I've been something of a quasi-father-figure to her.



My association with her started out with our connection to membership in the same church.

Today she is no longer a member of my church nor of any church. Although not bitter, she no longer believes. In fact, her faith has become so shattered that she no longer believes in the existence of God.

I suspect the question of whether there is a God may be the ultimate question of life.

The problem is, one cannot come to a conclusion to that question by using what I'll call "empirical" means. And this is where so many people, agnostics and atheists alike, get into trouble. They cannot come to grips with the verity that empirical approaches to the question of God's existence is somewhat akin to using a surfboard as your vehicle to travel to the moon. The vehicle in question is simply ill-suited to the task.

But because atheists and agnostics place their "faith" (an irony of deep consequence) in empiricism, it seems to be the only arrow in their quiver they are capable of reaching for, an arrow which inevitably brings them to the same empty conclusion: no God. Yet in doing so, they are much like the careless math pupil who approaches an Algebra problem incorrectly. I remember when I was first taught the Algebraic formula for multiplying linear binomials, such as:

$$(a + 3)(b + 5)$$

and I was taught that in order to arrive at the correct answer to such a problem, I must use a mnemonic device known as **FOIL**. FOIL stands for **First**, **Outer**, **Inner**, and **Last** (meaning I must multiple the FIRST variables of $(a \times b)$, then the OUTER variables of $(a \times 5)$, followed by the INNER variables of $(3 \times b)$ and finally the LAST variables of (3×5) . If I approach the problem that way, I

will ultimately arrive at the truth (i.e., the correct answer.) But if I approach it any other way, no matter how seemingly compelling, I will arrive at an answer - the answer, however, will be erroneous. It will be incorrect.

Employing a method that works in normal, everyday science (empiricism, or using our powers of natural observation) will always lead to wrong conclusions about the existence of God. God's existence simply cannot be ascertained through such means; if there is a God, He is not subject to our own "science experiments" the way water molecules are. He cannot be placed in a beaker the way nitric acid can be. He is not subject to our attempts at experimentation as we can do with other elements in a laboratory.

And yet, we are subject to Him, and He does reveal Himself in subtle, nuanced ways if we approach the question of His existence using the right method.

And while not entirely in the dark on this question, I do not pretend to have all of the answers in this regard. I do not claim to have discovered the perfect FOIL method for determining God's existence. But I do know this much: naturalistic approaches such as empiricism which work fine with discovering scientific truths are very simply the wrong approach in attempting to answer the profound question of whether there is, in fact, a Supreme Being.

While I make no claims to have discovered the perfect FOIL method for determining the question of God's existence, if forced to borrow the mnemonic device we call FOIL, it wouldn't require much stretching and tucking and pulling and fitting to transform it into the following: ***Faith - Obedience - Inquisitiveness - Long-term.***

Faith would refer to an assumptive trust, an implicit commitment to the notion that there is a God.

Obedience would recognize that if there is a God, He is holy and is far more likely to allow for a brush against the soul of His children who are given to holiness than to those who are selfish, wicked, or immoral. Thus, a commitment to aligning one's life with His will would seem to be a necessary prerequisite to receiving divine confirmation.

Inquisitiveness refers to a seeking after God, a hungering and thirsting to receive confirmation of His existence. Prayer and pondering would probably be a part

of this process.

Long-term refers to living one's life according to principles of goodness, love, kindness, and holiness for an extended duration, and not over the course of a weekend. If there is a God, and I stand with those who affirm His existence, He is probably not one to reward half-hearted effort on our part. He is more likely to reveal Himself to those who are serious and disciplined in their quest to know Him.

Discipline - that's where we get our word disciple.

I look forward to crossing paths with my young friend and sharing these and similar thoughts with her.

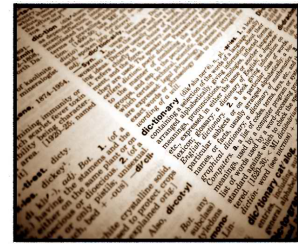
The World of Words

August

Building Your Power of Expression

August, adj.

Pronunciation: ô'gəst



Meaning: No, I am not referring to the 8th month of the year. This particular usage refers to anything or any group or anyone that is highly respected and impressive. If something or someone kindles feelings of admiration or a sense of majesty, that thing or person could said to be august.

Usage:

- *Reagan's "Evil Empire" speech was an august performance of strength and a personification of American Exceptionalism.*
- *The eminent historian, David McCullough, was never actually admitted to that august body known as the American Philosophical Society.*
- *She trembled with anticipation at the thought of being in the presence of such an august personage as the Queen of England.*

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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