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# Uncommon Sense

Providing Clarity, Promoting Intelligence

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Issue: # 084

October 31, 2014

## Greetings!

Great to have your attention once again.

While I usually write the pieces in this publication, occasionally I come across something either fun, insightful, or provocative that was the work of someone else. When that happens, I often opt to substitute my own message for theirs.



Such is the case with my opening article this issue -- a delightful contribution by Mr. Godfrey Harris, a brilliant and gregarious public policy consultant -- on the oft-overlooked topic of collecting. It originally appeared in the San Fernando Valley Business Journal for October 20, 2014. I reprint it here with his permission.

In fact, Mr. Harris is the brains behind an upcoming event I heartily endorse, and encourage you to attend -- a Collectors' Conclave Exhibit and Banquet. It will be held at the Sportsmen's Lodge here in sunny Southern California on Sunday November 30th and is meant to honor those who preserve and protect the objects of our cultural heritage. If you want to get more information, shoot off an email to [collectorsconclave@gmail.com](mailto:collectorsconclave@gmail.com) or call [310-476-6374](tel:310-476-6374).

I once again show I'm no stranger to controversy or stirring things up. Perhaps it's something in the Halloween air. . .

OK, let's get started.

Warm regards,

Ara Norwood

## Self-Development The Diminishing Art of Collecting

by

Godfrey Harris

In the days before 24/7 business operations, collecting something often helped relieve everyday pressures - whether the collection involved coins, stamps, books or more exotic passions such as Depression-era cars or modern-day paintings. Today, the value of collecting to the individual and to society is almost lost. Too many executives are too busy making their businesses succeed to devote any time and effort to a collection.

That's a shame. If not for the efforts of serious collectors of the past, what would museums hang on their walls, mount on pedestals or display in glass cases? Who would keep the artifacts of our culture from ending up in trash dumps or savaged by weather and neglect?



Those who assemble great collections are cultural heroes who deserve our constant appreciation. Take Dr. Joseph Kurstin, a now-retired Miami-based eye surgeon. Kurstin was once on a trip to Japan to inspect an historic netsuke -those miniature figures that hook over a kimono's obi sash to counterbalance a purse or tobacco pouch. When his friend and fellow netsuke collector Ray Bushell (whose netsuke collection is an important part of the Japanese Pavilion at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art), heard about the trip, Bushell said he didn't care when Kurstin returned to Tokyo, he wanted to be called immediately so he could see the netsuke for himself. Kurstin says that by the time he was back in his hotel room it was nearly 2 a.m. He called Bushell, who happily arose from a dead sleep and hurried over to examine Kurstin's find.

Passionate collectors like Joe Kurstin and Raymond Bushell

- or Norton Simon, whose art collection is the basis of the museum of the same name in Pasadena, or Thomas Jefferson, whose book collection restocked the Library of Congress after the British burned it in the War of 1812 - are highly dedicated, well informed and endlessly curious individuals who are driven to develop, expand and improve their acquisitions. While collectors have widely differing interests, span a broad range of ages, and represent hugely different asset bases, they all seem to have the same goal: to enjoy the beauty, appreciate the workmanship and understand the utility of the objects they collect while guarding against their destruction.

Collectors ought to be praised for the unbidden services they perform for society; unfortunately, all too often their contributions are either ignored or disparaged. No more. The Ivory Education Institute, a non-profit organization dedicated to improving understanding of the practical, artistic and decorative importance of ivory, is organizing the Collectors' Conclave - an exhibit of collections at the Sportsmen's Lodge on Sunday, Nov. 30, along with a banquet to honor Dr. Kurstin and to pay tribute to all collectors for the contributions they make to our culture.

Conclave speakers will also explore the possibility of redefining what constitutes an "antique" in the United States. Jewelry, for example, created in the art deco era or during the early post-World War II period are clearly not "antiques" in the classic U.S. definition of 100 years. Interestingly, that standard arose as part of the Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act of 1930 because the Congress determined that 1830 marked the start of mass production in the United States and only handcrafted items deserved to be given "antique" status. This accidental and questionable definition persists to the potential detriment of our culture by ignoring, for example, cars built in the 1930s and cell phones sold in the 1980s. Interestingly, the European Union defines antique as anything made before June 1, 1947, and the U.K. uses a moving 50-year definition.

The 100-year standard makes no sense in light of the technological assault challenging our adaptability to innovation. Shouldn't we consider using a term such as "Distinguished" to identify objects of educational and collectable value that deserve the same protection, advantages and cultural veneration as older items?

Rather than discouraging serious collectors by clinging to outdated concepts and rules, Washington ought to join us in providing collectors with accolades for what they do on behalf of our society.

*Godfrey Harris, a Los Angeles public policy consultant, is managing director of the Ivory Education Institute and can be contacted at [hrrmg@mac.com](mailto:hrrmg@mac.com).*

## **The Elephant in the Room** **Apple's CEO: Appealing To Authority**

There are a number of culture wars taking place before our very eyes. Political Correctness and being on the "right side of history" seems to preoccupy the minds of many an insecure individual. Whether the issue concerns global warming, free contraceptives, school prayer, whether Islam has any hand in terrorism, or gay rights (including marriage rights), what we are seeing is a quiet retreat from Conservatives and a bold blitzkrieg from Leftists. And thus, it's no surprise that Leftists are winning most of the time. There just don't seem to be very many bold, strong conservative voices with sound, compelling arguments out there to take on the mostly vacuous ones proffered by the Left.



One of the more recent volleys - this one concerning gay rights - comes to us courtesy of Steve Jobs' successor - Tim Cook, Apple's CEO. Writing in [Businessweek](#), Mr. Cook felt compelled to say things that had nothing whatsoever to do with the organization he is privileged to lead - nothing about its stock price, its products, its management systems, or its people. Instead, he used his airtime to say the following: ". . . Let me be clear: I'm proud to be gay." He goes on to tout the benefits that being gay has brought to him, benefits such as a deeper understanding, being more empathetic, having a thicker skin, and having a richer life. I take it that he believes were it not for his sexual orientation, he would have had a less rich life.

Interestingly, most people who are deeply committed to the God of the Bible and who believe its teachings come to the unmistakable conclusion that homosexuality is considered an affront to that God. In fact, this has caused many gay activists to hold disdain for the Bible, for the Judeo-Christian tradition, and often, even for the very notion of God.

But Mr. Cook is no atheist. He claims in the Businessweek piece, "I consider being gay among the greatest gifts God has given me." It would be interesting to know if he feels being gay is a gift from God not only to himself, but to all who are gay. If so, I wonder if he feels those whom God made to be heterosexual are not quite as blessed. And if that is his view, it's an interesting and innovative way of looking at how God operates.

What is clear is that, in spite of Mr. Cook's denials that he is an activist, an activist is precisely what he is, as the Businessweek article bears out. Mr. Cook makes it clear that making "being gay" normative, perhaps even preferred, is a goal he has, and he intends to use his bully pulpit as Apple's CEO to accomplish that objective. And because of his position, he will undoubtedly bend more than quite a few unformed minds to embrace his world-view, a world-view he is rewarded for, not challenged for.

Contrast all of that with a similar CEO of another high-tech Silicon Valley firm, Brendan Eich. As I have written in past issues of this publication, Mr. Eich held the polar opposite view, at least as it pertains to the marriage question. And for holding such a view - all the while not being an activist in any way, shape, or form - Mr. Eich was ousted as CEO about 9 days after he was promoted to the position, simply because he quietly and privately made a donation to a ballet initiative to keep marriage defined the way it historically always has.

Tim Cook advocates for a position and is given plenty of airtime to do so. Brendan Eich merely holds an opposite position without ever talking about it and is run out of town.

Left vs. Right. It's just that simple.

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

## Shameless Plug

### Heading To Chicago

I am heading to Chicago, a big town I've had quite a bit of experience with, in just over a week.

A trade association in the financial services industry has invited me to deliver a program to their international audience on



the topic of Behavioral Interviewing. It's going to be an exciting opportunity.

## From Ara's Journal

### Stop Catering To Ninnies

Every so often people with way too much time on their hands and way too little purpose in life, decide to find something to be offended about. They run to friends, neighbors, strangers, and Human Resource personnel to blather on about their grievances - real or imagined (often imagined) in the hopes that they will find an audience.



What is remarkable is that so many people do side with them. HR professionals are notorious in this regard. They hear a complaint - regardless of how petty or ridiculous - and they feel they must take action. Launch an investigation. Write someone up. Hold a counseling session. Terminate a person. Put an alleged offender on probation.

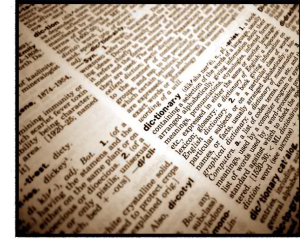
While there are times the complaints have merit, there are other times the complaints are groundless. So why do HR Professionals find it impossible to simply discern the valid from the nonsense? And why do they treat virtually all

complaints with the same level of attention and seriousness? Why is it they cannot find it in themselves to simply tell the ninnyies to grow up?

## The World of Words

### Permeate

#### Building Your Power of Expression



Permeate v.

Pronunciation: 'pərmē,āt

**Meaning:** To permeate something is to spread it around, to pervade something, to penetrate or fill or filter through something.

**Usage:**

- *His no-nonsense style began to permeate throughout the entire organization.*
- *We pray for the healing of a society so permeated by greed.*
- *Truth should permeate every aspect of a person's life.*

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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  
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