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# Uncommon Sense

Providing Clarity, Promoting Intelligence

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Issue: # 089

February 26, 2015

## Greetings!

Just a quick note to thank you for being a loyal subscriber to Uncommon Sense. I'm way late with this issue, as another one is set to go out in a mere two days.

Happy reading.

OK, let's get started.

Ara Norwood



## Self-Development

### Micro-Improvements

We can learn much from other cultures. The world is such an interesting place that we can often be pleasantly surprised by ideas and customs we come across when we visit other countries, lands, and peoples.

One idea I picked up from Japan (a country I have never actually set foot on) is the notion of kaizen.

Kaizen essentially refers to the notion of ongoing micro-improvements. It's a great idea. And it isn't practiced exclusively by the Japanese; it just means that when we non-Japanese practice it, we are doing a very Japanese thing - just as when the Japanese practice entrepreneurship, they are doing a very American thing.

Here's an example you all can relate to. You have a resume that you've used the same resume for the last 8 years. You finally decide to dust it off and revamp it. So you spend a Saturday afternoon working on it, for perhaps 4 or 5 hours. The result is a complete overhaul - and you think it looks fantastic. In fact, you believe it can't possibly be improved upon.



Yet it can.

If you were pushed, or if you had a good coach, you'd find that there was still some flaw lurking around that you missed. If you went at it again a few days later you'd find that there is some improvement that could be instituted, however small, to make the resume a bit better.

And the beauty of kaizen is not in how one iteration impacts the resume (or whatever you are practicing Kaizen on); it's the impact you attain over a period of time. Practice kaizen on your resume, or your fitness program, or your ability to speak effectively, and you'll find that over time you will become quite formidable.

## The Elephant in the Room Elections Have Consequences

My head is about to explode.

The inability of this administration to comprehend the obvious and unmistakable nature of the greatest threat to civilization at the present time is staggering.

So let me make some unequivocal statements about what is really going



on:

- There are over a billion believers in Islam on the earth. They consider the Koran holy scripture the way Christians consider the Bible to be holy scripture.
- While most Muslims are decent people who want peace, a number of Muslims, perhaps [numbering in the millions](#), want to impose their religion on the rest of the population of this planet. Some of them will do so through violent means. Some of them want to murder any and all (including other Muslims) who do not share their radicalized worldview.
- There are passages in the Koran that [clearly support violent extremism](#). Thus, while most Muslims do not seem to allow such passages to inform their behavior towards others, a radicalized segment within Islam do allow such passages to operate as their personal philosophy, thus resulting in brutal atrocities towards others - including crucifying children, burying women alive, burning people alive in cages, and beheading others, not to mention raping and torturing their victims.
- These radicalized Muslims consider themselves true followers of Islam and they can cite passages in the Koran to justify the atrocities they commit. These people are found among groups such as ISIS, Al Qaeda, The Taliban, Hamas, Boko Haram, and Hezbollah, among [many others](#). As far as countries go, Iran is the largest state sponsor of terrorism.
- Their [ultimate objective](#) is to destroy every living Jew from off the face of the earth, to eliminate the existence of Israel as a sovereign nation, to destroy all democratic and free nations, and to impose something known as [Sharia Law](#) on the entire population of the planet. In their mind, every single living person on earth must be a Muslim, must practice Islam, and there are to be no other religions on the earth.

And we re-elected a man as the leader of the free world who is now dithering in the face of a monstrous threat to civilization. As a result of the American people re-electing this man:

- We have a president who cannot even bring himself to accurately identify the enemy as having Islamic ties.
- We have a president who tries to shield Muslim terrorists from any association with Islam, while he has no problems shining a spotlight on the wrongdoing of Christians as Christians - even if such wrongdoing occurred [a thousand years ago](#). He won't shine that same spotlight on Islamic atrocities that are happening right now. For example, when over 20 Egyptian Christians were recently beheaded by ISIS, the White House referred to the victims as "Egyptian Citizens," carefully avoiding mentioning their religion. However, when a terrible murder of three young Muslims took place recently in North Carolina at about the same time, [the White House took pains](#) to identify the victims' religion as Islam.
- We have a president who believes that we have to understand why terrorists are terrorists. We have to address their social grievances, as if they are legitimate. We have to [offer them jobs](#) in order to stop them from being terrorists. But decisively destroying them from off the face of the earth through conventional military means does not seem to be something he is anxious to do.
- President Obama and Vice President Joe Biden will not show even a modicum of respect to one of our closest allies, [Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu](#) of Israel, yet they will offer all sorts of concessions to the greatest state sponsor of international terrorism, Iran - a nation that is seeking nuclear capabilities and one that is simply not trustworthy to keep their promises.

I have never encountered such a colossal level of naiveté. If the president were to approach a group of ISIS thugs and offer them jobs in exchange for them to forego their terrorist ways, they would all fall on the ground laughing hysterically, and once they composed themselves, they would decapitate him.

We elected this man of the Left. And now we have to live with the consequences of our actions. We have no choice but to wait. We wait until January 2017 when a new person will occupy the White House. And we can only hope that the new leader we elect will actually exercise

leadership in confronting this very ominous threat to our existence - for the threat is very real. We can expect little to no leadership from the current administration.

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

## From Ara's Journal Final Thoughts on Charlie Hebdo

Although it's been more than a month, I have not forgotten the murderous rampage that took place at the offices of Charlie Hebdo in Paris on January 7th.



I think it instructive to make a few final comments on this horrific episode.

The people who worked at Charlie Hebdo made their living by mocking and ridiculing religion - not just Islam, but pretty much every religion (except atheism) was fair game. The writers and cartoonists of Charlie Hebdo did not respect what religious believers considered sacred. Instead, they targeted it, making it a focus of their satirical mockery. The fact that what they published was offensive, hurtful, and angering to religious believers of all stripes did not matter to them. Actually, I stand corrected: it did matter, yet they took pleasure in offending the religious sensibilities of others.

I hold a different set of values.

Let me give you an illustration: as a college professor, I open each of my classes by walking down "memory lane" and highlighting major events that took place on that day in history, reviewing events of significance from the world of entertainment, politics, the military, law, business, sports, religion, etc. I do this by showing a photo of the event in question on a PowerPoint slide as I comment on it.

A few semesters ago, it just so happened that a story had

taken place on that date involving cartoons depicting the prophet Muhammad, which had caused a controversy throughout Europe. I had a slide in my PowerPoint deck showing the actual cartoon of the prophet Muhammad. I also had a Muslim student in my class that semester. I wasn't sure how pious this student was, so I approached him before class began and asked him. I told him that this evening's "Today In History" segment included the cartoon of Muhammad and I asked how he might react to my showing it. He told me he would be highly offended if I did, and he further stated that if I went ahead with plans to show it, he would prefer to be outside of the classroom at the time.

I didn't show it.

I didn't show it out of respect for the feelings of this Muslim student. I was in no way intimidated by this student, but I reasoned that if one student would be negatively affected by my showing this cartoon - especially on religious grounds - then it simply wasn't worth it. Even though I strongly believe in academic freedom, and freedom of speech, I also believe in preserving the dignity of other human beings.

The effect of my not showing the Muhammad cartoon had a profound and positive impact on this student. He went and told his parents, relatives, and friends about my gesture of not showing the cartoon and reported back to me that both he himself and every single Muslim family member and associate he told of the incident had all marveled at my graciousness and the act commanded their united respect. He even brought me gifts. On the last day of class, he presented me with a hand-written letter in which expressed his deep and profound respect towards me. Of course, I didn't do it for those reasons. I did it simply because I believe in showing respect and deference to people's most sacred religious beliefs, even if I don't share them myself.

Such a different mindset from those who worked at Charlie Hebdo. They took delight in mocking the most sacred religious beliefs of others. In that sense, they were like "religious bullies."

But let me say this: while I know what it feels like to experience real rage and anger towards persons who mock my religious faith, it would never occur to me to take the life of such persons. Debate them? Yes. Challenge them publicly? Yes. Perhaps even embarrass them with my rhetoric? Yes - I would want to stigmatize their poor behavior. But murder them? It would simply never occur to me.

So while the people at Charlie Hedbo were low-lifes, they did not deserve to die. Radical Islam is a far greater evil to civilization than the shallow, small-minded, almost-clever secularists employed at Charlie Hebdo. And for that reason, on this occasion, I am inclined to say, with others I normally do not agree with, *Je suis Charlie*.

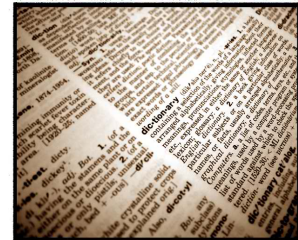
## The World of Words

### Quixotic

#### Building Your Power of Expression

**Quixotic**, adj.

**Pronunciation:** kwik'sätik



**Meaning:** The origins of this word hail from the fictitious character, Don Quixote, the hero of *The Man from La Mancha* by Cervantes. As an adjective, the word essentially refers to a quality of being impractical and unrealistically optimistic or idealistic. People who are quixotic tend to exhibit an inability to distinguish between their ideals and reality.

**Usage:**

- *Going to war against an ideology is quixotic.*
- *David knew full well that running for class president was a quixotic idea, but he was not going to let his enemy run unopposed.*
- *It is quixotic to think you can get away with strolling into the prison and breaking out your boyfriend.*

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