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Uncommon Sense

Providing Clarity, Promoting Intelligence

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Issue: # 092

March 31, 2015

Greetings!

The controversies continue, with gay rights activists teaming up with the mainstream media to spread misinformation about a law that became operative in Indiana recently. I sort out the issues below.

Also up for discussion is something I noticed with the secular left which was trying to pull a fast one on us in their never-ending attempt to rewrite history and make conservatives look bad.

But I lead off with some important advice on what not to do when making presentations in a work setting. Read it, learn from it, follow it.

OK, let's get started.

Ara Norwood



Self-Development

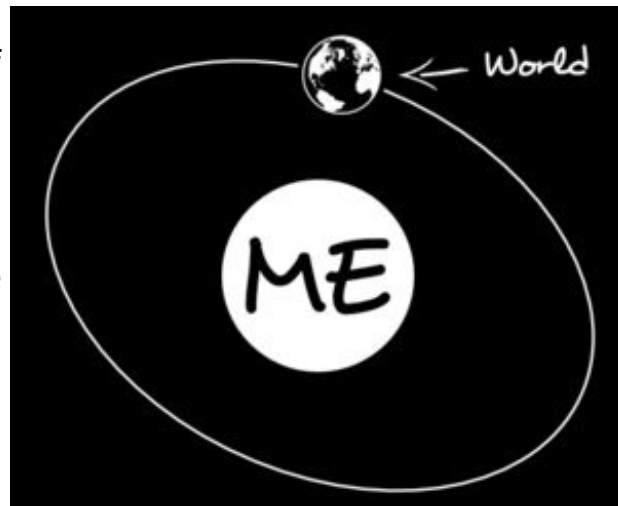
How to Lose An Audience

I was recently going through some papers of mine, trying to locate a certain document, when I came across some notes I had taken about two years ago. The occasion was a half-day seminar I had attended, given by a rather intelligent, accomplished woman. The topic, as I recall, was negotiation, a subject near and dear to my heart.

In reviewing my notes, I was reminded that this professional woman was only partially effective in delivering her presentation. Strong on many levels, her *Achilles Heel* was the plain and simple fact that she was far too self-absorbed. I know this because I counted how many times she made gratuitous references to herself that did nothing for the learning which was supposed to be taking place, but probably stroked her own ego.

My notes indicated that in a four-hour program (which included a 15 minute break) she made exactly 35

references to herself, none of which were necessary. Not one of them added to the program. None of them provided value. Yet there they were: 35 unnecessary



references to herself, foisted upon us whether we liked it or not. That's almost 9 references each hour, or more than one self-congratulatory reference every six minutes.

I don't think I am alone in believing that the habit of making such frequent but vacuous self-references was both nauseating and distracting. Up to a point, there is nothing wrong with it. But at some point, it made everyone's eyes roll after about the 17th reference to herself.

There's a lesson in that experience for the rest of us. When making a presentation, be mindful of how often you reference yourself. And more to the point, be cognizant of why you are doing so. Is your self-reference providing valuable take-aways to the audience in some way? Or is it merely feeding your own insecurities? If the latter, make a conscious effort to curtail such tendencies. You will do both yourself and your audiences a world of good.

Yanking Out The Bush By Its Roots: Perpetuating A Narrative

Earlier this month we saw a commemoration of the historic civil rights march on Selma, Alabama of 50 years ago. With President Obama leading the way, the crowds who marched were living reminders of the great strides that have taken place over the decades for civil rights, both for people of color and for all minorities.



In the photo above, we see President Obama in a white shirt and tie, standing next to a lady in a wheel chair. Pan further to the right of this photo and you will see another man wearing a white shirt and tie. This person is former President George W. Bush, President Obama's predecessor. He was also celebrating the strides that have been made in the area of civil rights. (In case you don't see him, I reproduce the photo below with a red circle highlighting the former president.)



But low and behold, the photo was shown on the front

page of the New York Times with President Bush cropped out of the photo.

"All the News That's Fit to Print"

The New York Times

Late Edition
Today, periods of clouds and sunshine, mid- to high 40s. Tonight, clear to partly cloudy, low 30s. Tomorrow, partly sunny, occasional high 40s. Weather map, Page 26.

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Work of Selma 'Not Yet Over,' President Says
Marking Progress and Challenges Since '65

By PETER BAKER and RICHARD FAUSSET

SELMA, Ala. — As a new generation struggles over race and power in America, President Obama and a host of political figures from both parties came here on Saturday, to the site of one of the most searing days of the civil rights era, to reflect on how far the country has come and how far it still has to go.

Fifty years after peaceful protesters trying to cross a bridge were beaten by police officers with billy clubs, shocking the nation and leading to passage of the landmark Voting Rights Act of 1965, the nation's first African-American president led a bipartisan, bipartisan testimonial to the pioneers whose courage helped pave the way for his own election to the highest office of the land.

But coming just days after Mr. Obama's Justice Department ex-

FERGUSON BECAME SYMBOL OF AN ILL-PLAGUING THE U.S.
EXPLOITATION BY POLICE

Many Cities Raise Cash by Fining the Poor — Scrutiny Growing

This article is by Campbell Robertson, Shaila Dewan and Matt Apuzzo.

If the shooting of Michael Brown had taken place about 500 yards to the southeast, he would have died not in Ferguson, Mo., but in the neighboring city of Jennings. The court system there, which is overseen by a white judge but has almost exclusively black defendants, routinely sends people to jail for failure to pay minor traffic fines, a new lawsuit alleges.

Had the shooting occurred three and a half miles to the north, the world's attention might have turned to the city of Floris-

PHOTO BY AP/WIDEWORLD

President Obama and Representative John Lewis led thousands in a commemorative march across the Edmund Pettus Bridge.

Why do you suppose the Republican President was cropped out, leaving only the Democratic President dead center?

The New York Times insists innocence, claiming the photo they published was the photo they received. They claim they knew nothing about the cropping out of the former president. They place the blame on the photographer.

For his part, the photographer who shot the photo accepts responsibility for having cropped out President Bush, but insists he did so only for aesthetic reasons, not political reasons. He claims that since President Obama was standing in shade (which he was) and President Bush was standing in sunlight (which he partially was) that the photo would not look good with President Bush in the photo. (I would love to know if there was a flurry of frantic phone calls to the photographer initiated by the NY Times, once this issue became public.)

Actually, I have a suspicion that there is another reason for removing President Bush from the photo -- a reason that would coincide with the values and ideology of the New York Times.

Having President Bush in the photo renders a narrative that both Democrats and Republican leaders support civil rights -- which they do. However, this narrative is not the narrative that Leftist entities (such as the NY Times) want the public to believe. The Left wish to paint Republicans and conservatives as racist, mean-spirited, bigoted, hate-filled old white men. Having President Bush in the photo

violates that preferred, but false, narrative. So he was removed.

If you really believe that President Bush was removed due to aesthetic issues involving lighting, just ask yourself this question: "If the two presidents had been standing in exactly opposite spots when the photo was taken, would the New York Times have published a photo on their front page with President Bush front-and-center, and President Obama cropped out?"

I rest my case.

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

From Ara's Journal

The Indiana Law: Resolving the Debate

Currently a debate is raging in the state of Indiana. Actually, the scope of the debate is nation-wide. The governor, Mike Pence, signed into law a version of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act which was originally made law back in 1993 by Democratic President Bill Clinton. The law as enshrined by the state of Indiana essentially makes it legal for both individuals, non-profits, and corporations to not be "burdened" (the legal term) when being asked to provide services that conflict with their own deeply held religious beliefs. The trauma being felt by this law affects members of the LGBT community and their supporters (Lady Gaga, Madonna, most all of the supposedly objective mainstream media, pretty much anyone Left-of-Center), thus, giving such persons who feel so burdened the possibility of a legal way to decline service to persons or entities (gays and lesbians for example) whose objectives violate the religious convictions of the service provider. The people who would likely appeal to this law would typically be believing, practicing Christians, Jews, and Muslims.



The mainstream media as well as social media has been a source of an inordinate amount of heat, not light, on the matter. I will now sort out the facts from the spin.

Here's the background: there are significant numbers of people living in the United States who believe the teachings of the Bible. In other words, the Bible serves as a source (if not the source) of their moral compass. The Bible's teachings on homosexuality are rather unambiguous: it is seen as a very serious sin on par with adultery, and was punishable by death under the Law of Moses. The New Testament also provides rather sobering warnings about homosexuality, which it considers to be a grave sin.

So imagine you are a Jew, or a Christian, or a Muslim, and you own a bakery. A gay man comes into your bakery and tells you he is getting married to another man and wants you to provide the cake for their same-sex wedding. Or say you are deeply religious, you consider homosexuality a moral depravity, and a lesbian couple comes into your photography studio and says they are getting married and want to hire you to provide the pictures for their wedding.

Such a baker or photographer would, understandably, not wish to lend support to a cause they find deplorable on moral and religious grounds. Yet because of the influence of the secular Left, many of these religious people who own businesses such as bakeries or photography studios have been not only viciously and relentlessly harassed and threatened, but have been the recipients of court orders that they must provide such services even though doing so violates their most deeply held religious convictions, and if they refuse, they could face jail time and/or fines that run into the hundreds of thousands of dollars.

We need to acknowledge that those who are trying to practice their religion (or at least not violate their most sacred tenets) are U.S. citizens who have certain protections under the U.S. Constitution.

Members of the LGBT community are U.S. citizens also. Whatever one may think of the morality of their sexual orientation, they have certain rights as well.

To force a Christian photographer to work a gay wedding seems to violate the rights to the religious beliefs of that Christian photographer.

To deny a gay couple photographic services at their wedding would seem to violate the gay couple's rights as well.

So it looks like we have an impasse. One side of this divide will get their way at the expense of the other side.

However, that is precisely why the law signed by Governor Pence is necessary and appropriate. Currently, gay activists don't just want to obtain photography services or wedding cakes. Their in-your-face activism causes them to force religious believers to be the ones who must, by legal fiat from activist judges, provide services that violate their most sacred beliefs. Gay activists experience much glee and sadistic satisfaction in doing this.

The law signed by Governor Pence evens out the playing field. Gay people can still get all of the services they wish to have -- photography, wedding cakes, flowers, etc., -- but they can obtain those services from any of the many providers of such services whose consciences are not bothered by homosexual ideology. Gay people who think in terms of: "I don't want my wedding services from just anybody; I want them only from religious people who don't want to give them to me!" need to grow up and stop behaving like trouble-makers. Their hatred of religion does not give them license to hamper the religion of others.

When George Stephanopoulos asked the point-blank question of Governor Mike Pence, "Yes or no, if a florist in Indiana refuses to serve a gay couple at their wedding, is that legal now in Indiana?" Governor Pence should have answered with this question: "Yes or no, George, if a Christian florist in your state refuses to serve a gay couple at their wedding, should that florist be legally forced to do so, when doing so causes her to violate her most sacred religious convictions?"

While it is true that the law in Indiana does have the potential to discriminate against gay persons on a limited basis, gay persons still can obtain whatever services they want by going elsewhere. Yet even then, the Religious Freedom Restoration Act simply allows the courts to

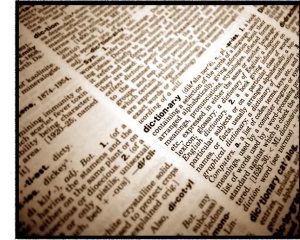
consider the possibility of siding with those who claim religious convictions -- it [does not guarantee](#) the courts will always side with them. Without the law, there is a 100% chance that religious discrimination against certain florists, photographers, or bakers will take place.

And it will often come about because the secular Left was looking to instigate a problem.

The World of Words

Plaintive

Building Your Power of Expression



Plaintive, adj.

Pronunciation: 'plāntiv

Meaning: A plaintive expression would be one in which the speaker sounds sad, down in the dumps, or mournful.

Usage:

- *His personality is a strange mix of plaintive melancholy and chipper optimism.*
- *The key to plaintive singing when conveying sorrowful subjects rests on the faltering of the tongue, as if overwhelmed by grief.*
- *The mood was dampened by the rather plaintive plea for a return to the old days of lax security.*

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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