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Uncommon Sense

Providing Clarity, Promoting Intelligence

In This Issue

[The Fly on the Wall](#)
[The Two Islams](#)
[On Running](#)
[Add Contrarian to your Vocabulary](#)

Quick Links

[Ara's Web Site](#)
[Facebook Page](#)

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Issue: # 099

July 13, 2015

Greetings!

It's hard to believe I'm on the cusp of producing my 100th issue. However, it is the 99th issue that is before you, so that is the one that counts!

In this issue I provide you with a tip for growing your people, timely advice if you manage others in any capacity, but still valuable if you do not, for you may in the days ahead.



Also, I take on one of the most consequential issues facing humankind today: Islam. As Dennis Prager wrote in his landmark book, [Still The Best Hope](#), there are three ideologies vying for the allegiance of mankind: Islamism, Leftism, and American Values (which includes Judaeo-Christian ideology.) Prager's section on Islamism, to which he devotes 75 pages, remains to date one of the most balanced and incisive critiques on the subject ever written. I humbly attempt to add an additional contribution to the topic here.

And I offer a few random musings about my experience with a recent 5K run.

I hope you sink your teeth into this issue and read with gusto!

OK, let's get started.

Ara Norwood

The Fly on the Wall

Our powers for observation are quite acute when we apply them. Trouble is, we often don't.

We live in a topsy-turvy world where action and execution and activity are foisted upon us by our calendar and the nature of our work. As such, we are often in the thick of things, on stage as it were, and operating in a "live" environment. Thus, we often fail to have the necessary "process time" to ponder things, take in the implications of the events going on around us, and make sense of it all.

My suggestion: periodically play the role of the proverbial "fly on the wall." The fly on the wall is outside the action taking place on the stage below. The fly on the wall is perched up high, overlooking the activity that is going on.



If we want to know how the people we are responsible for (or managing) are performing, we should periodically stop our so-called "normal work" and park ourselves in a place where we can observe them in action. I have started the practice of spending one day a month observing each of the 5 direct reports on my team so I can see how they are performing and give them coaching in an informed way, helping them build on their very considerable strengths, and helping refine them by working on some of the liabilities that they (and all of us) possess.

Is it making a difference? Yes! At the very least, they know I care. And I become more informed about their performance and their contributions. Additionally, it positions me to coach them with relevant and on-target content.

My recommendation: each month, carve out time to be a fly on the wall with each of your direct reports. Observe their

performance. Then meet with them individually and discuss what you learned. You do not need to necessarily focus on their liabilities or weaknesses. While that often is appropriate, it is just as appropriate, if not more so, to focus on their strengths and build their strengths to a point that those very strengths overwhelm and make irrelevant their weaknesses.

The Elephant in the Room

The Two Islams

I propose we are long overdue for a candid and frank discussion about Islam.

Most people seem to want to shirk the need for straight talk on this matter, and ignorance abounds when it comes to our understanding of this significant and influential religious movement. Let's sort a few things out.

Islam is the uber-monotheistic religious movement that originated

sometime in the late 6th or early 7th century with Muhammad, who is revered by Muslims the world over as a holy



prophet. As is the case with many prophets, Muhammad produced a sacred text, the Qur'an. Today there are over 1.5 billion Muslims (i.e., believers in Islam) and the religion is arguably the fastest growing religion in the world.

The question could be raised as to whether Islam is a religion of peace. After 9/11, President George W. Bush publicly proclaimed it was, even though it was Muslims that carried out that heinous, murderous act of barbarism.

I know a number of Muslims personally. ZA, MM, and FM come to mind. None of them have struck me as having a violent bone in their body. They are among the most peaceful human beings I know. Conversely, I know a Muslim, FT, who is quite volatile and of a hostile, violent disposition. He seems incapable of controlling his passions

and is often quite angry and irrational. While I don't think of him as a terrorist, if someday I found out he carried out a terrorist attack, I would not be particularly surprised. If ZA did such a thing, I would be shocked beyond repair as it would be wholly uncharacteristic of her character.

Although Islam is one religion, it is actually perceived and lived in two distinct ways.

Some Muslims -- most, in fact -- zero in on the peaceful Islam that President Bush spoke about. But other Muslims, whose souls are drenched in bloodthirstiness, find validation for their madness in certain passages that are, in fact, in the Qur'an, and they conduct their lives with a viciousness and a brutish barbarity that is unconscionable. Groups like the Taliban, al-Qaeda, ISIS/ISIL, Hezbollah, Boko Haram, and Hamas carry out atrocities that cause persons of decency to tremble at the inhumane savagery that these monsters in human guise inflict on other people.

So that there is no question, here are four random passages in the Qur'an that terrorists turn to for justification of their violent approach to life:

"I will cast terror into the hearts of those who disbelieve. Therefore strike off their heads and strike off every fingertip of them" (Qur'an 8:12.)

"So when the sacred months have passed away, then slay the idolaters wherever you find them, and take them captive and besiege them and lie in wait for them in every ambush, then if they repent and keep up prayer and pay the poor-rate, leave their way free to them." (Qur'an 9:5.)

"Fight those who believe not in Allah nor the Last Day, nor hold that forbidden which hath been forbidden by Allah and His Messenger, nor acknowledge the religion of Truth, (even if they are) of the People of the Book, until they pay the Jizya with willing submission, and feel themselves subdued." (Qur'an 9:29.)

"Those who disbelieve follow falsehood, while those who believe follow the truth from their Lord... So, when you meet those who disbelieve smite at their necks till when you have killed and wounded many of them, then bind a bond firmly. If it had been Allah's Will, He Himself could certainly have punished them (without you). But (He lets you fight), in order to test you, some with others. But those who are killed in the Way of Allah, He will never let their deeds be lost." (Qur'an 47:3-4.)

There are many more passages in the Qur'an advocating violence. Whatever the context of those passages, even if the most qualified scholars were to demonstrate unequivocally that those passages are taken out of context in some way, this does not change the fact that there are passages in the Qur'an that terrorists turn to in order to justify their bloodthirsty actions.

Among the things that trouble me the most in all of this is the wanton denial by the American Left as to the problem that is inherent in today's Islam. The secular Left simply will not bring themselves to condemn or to even acknowledge that a problem exists within Islam. The examples of this subterfuge and obfuscation are legion, but here are a few examples:

- October 2010, Leftists Joy Behar and Whoopi Goldberg [stormed off their own set](#) on The View after Conservative Bill O'Reilly made the statement that it was Muslims who killed us on 9/11.
- Remember when the Islamic Terrorists massacred the people at the Charlie Hebdo office in Paris last January? The former head of the Democratic Party, Howard Dean, [denied that the terrorists were Muslim](#), even though they shouted the Islamic phrase, "Allahu akbar" ("God is great") as they fired their guns.
- And it is well known that the leader of the free world, President Obama, has [inexplicitly refused](#) to ever

utter the words Islam or Muslim when he talks about Islamic terrorism, preferring instead the more ambiguous "violent extremism."

And the other problem is that peace-loving Muslims have mostly failed to condemn their more violent brethren in unambiguous terms. The result of this seeming indifference or inability to confront decisively the mess in their own backyard is somewhat akin to what the Roman Catholic Church has experienced by failing to decisively confront the sex abuse cases by their own clergy: the problem grows worse, and then eventually there are consequences to be paid. The Catholic Church has had to pay in terms of loss of membership, bad PR, and millions of dollars in lawsuits. Only time will tell if the Islamic world continues to pay the enormous price they have paid thus far through subjugation, war, and death.

The facts are these: there are two Islams - one is lived by peaceful, responsible citizens from that faith-community. The other is lived by a group of madmen who love death, who deal in brutality, and who are inhumane. The former should be respected. The latter should be both called what they really are, and then annihilated, preferably by the military units from other Muslim nations, assisted by a broader coalition when appropriate.

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

Shameless Plug

Norwood Slated For Two More Management Courses

Starting August 24th it will be my privilege to once again deliver two separate 16-week courses on the discipline of Management at College of the Canyons. These courses will be presented on Monday evenings at the Valencia Campus and on Thursday evenings at the Canyon Country Campus, and I have completely revamped the content of the course.

Both classes are expected to reach their capacity of available seating.

Having had the good fortune of studying management in graduate school with Peter Drucker, the elder statesman of management as a formal discipline, I have much of value to bequeath to these students.



If you're not familiar with the name of Peter

Drucker (shown to the right, shaking hands with me just a few months prior to his passing in 2005), I can put it in perspective this way: studying management with Drucker would be akin to studying theoretical physics with Einstein.

If you are interested in registering for either class, visit the COC website by [clicking here](#).

From Ara's Journal

On Running

On July 4th, it was my privilege to participate in a 5K run in my community.

I really only prepared for this event by training a grand total of 4 days. But I managed to complete the run.



I had never competed in a race of this type. I wondered how it was that I would be fairly timed since I was at the back of the pack as the gun went off and the clock started ticking, and I didn't even cross the starting line until more than a full minute had passed. I soon learned that the "chip" I had attached to my shoe provided the technology to track my actual time, from start to finish.

While running, I had one goal in mind: to beat my previous time. I had completed a practice 5K run on my own on July 1st, clocking a time of 30:43. That was the time I had to beat.

While on the July 4th run, surrounded by many people, I

sensed I was moving at a somewhat faster pace. I took from this that when other competitors are present, one tends to perform at a higher level than when one is working alone. Competition is a good thing.

While running, I found myself passing many people. Of course, that's only natural since I began the race from the back of the pack, so there was nowhere to go but up. As the runners settled into a pace that was comfortable for them, I eventually found myself running alongside a man who looked to be about 62 years of age. We chatted very briefly and I learned that he was actually 56, a year younger than me. We were running along side each other for the great majority of the race, with me occasionally leading him about a few yards, and then he passing me and remaining 5 to 10 yards ahead of me for a bit, until I finally passed him and left him in the dust.

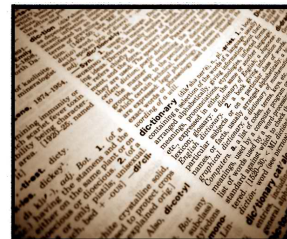
As I turned the final corner of the race, I saw the finish line ahead of me, perhaps 300 yards away. You couldn't miss it, as it was adorned with a large arch made of an assortment of balloons. Although fatigued, seeing the finish line gave me new energy and resolve to not quit and not slow down, but rather, to pick up the pace. As I got about 50 yards from the finish line I decided to really let it rip, and, throwing caution to the wind, I began some semblance of a sprint. I ran alongside a young athletic kid, probably about 13 years of age, who was going at my same pace. We were running neck and neck towards the finish line, but that kid was not about to allow some old guy to beat him, so he found even greater reserves than those I had, and he moved ahead of me. Mr. 56, whom I had left behind earlier, came in more than a minute later.

Running along side others did improve my performance. I shaved more than a minute from my practice run time of July 1st, coming in 14th place out of 29 competitors in my age group, and garnering a time of 29:16. The 13th place finisher clocked in a mere 2 seconds ahead of me. The winner of my category came in at 22:48 -- 6 minutes and 28 seconds faster than me.

I'm looking forward to continuing my running. And I'm looking forward to competing in future runs -- not so much with other runners as with myself.

Contrarian

Building Your Power of Expression



Contrarian, n., adj.

Pronunciation: kən'tre(ə)rēən

Meaning: As a noun, a contrarian is a person who does not go along with the conventional thinking of the day; this person has alternative views on a matter. As an adjective, something that is contrarian is something that is in opposition to the prevailing views. It takes courage and an independent mind to be contrarian.

Usage:

- *Many Republicans feel that Donald Trump's contrarian outspokenness on illegal immigration is hurting the party.*
- *I think he should hire him, if for no other reason than he is a contrarian, and will keep us from becoming complacent.*
- *I tend to take a contrarian approach to such matters, as I tend to prefer to stand out from the crowd.*

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).

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