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# Uncommon Sense

Providing Clarity, Promoting Intelligence

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Issue: # 100

July 31, 2015

## Greetings!

With your support and continued encouragement, we have reached a milestone with this, our one-hundredth issue of *Uncommon Sense*. I cannot thank you all enough for your championing this cause.

In this 100th issue, I offer a random smattering of previous commentary from the three columns that make up the bulk of this publication:

- Self-Development
- The Elephant in the Room
- From Ara's Journal

Also, I continue with tradition and provide a new vocabulary word in The World of Words column.

The 200th issue will not likely go out until late August of 2019. I hope you will stay with us through the intervening issues and continue to send me your comments on my writings. Thank you again for your continued support to things that bring wisdom and perspective.

Looks like I'm going to get this sent out just before midnight!

OK, let's get started.

Ara Norwood



### A Retrospective

- If you have aspirations to become something you are not currently - a painter, an archer, a comedian, a mathematician, or an optometrist - recognize that you have within you the power to transform your life. You can reinvent yourself.
- I think the key is to strive to be more self-aware. By merely asking ourselves how we might be coming across to other people, we can usually self-correct or adjust our approach or our style in an appropriate manner. It's when we turn off our radar that we can get into trouble. If we strive to allow for a fair amount of balance in our interactions with others, combining listening to our speaking, and give others a chance to contribute so that we really can listen, we can vastly improve the outcomes in our communications with others.
- Whatever undesirable traits of our past, and regardless of how they got there, being a transition figure suggests that we have within us the ability to overcome the pull of the past.
- Coaches usually have a narrowly defined focus, helping you improve performance in a specific area, say public speaking, or getting your website up and running efficiently, or launching your online newsletter. Mentors, by contrast, typically have a broader, more panoptic view to helping you evolve from point A to point B.
- People who are effective are that way, in large part, because they plan to be. Planning is an important component of the successful individual. When coupled with the all-important component we call execution, the two combine to produce a formidable achiever. There are many ways to engage in the planning process.
- People behave in ways that are not that hard to predict. Why do I say that? Because we are wired to make choices based on how we are incentivized to do so. Incentives drive human behavior.

- How much debt do you have? And how much of that is credit card debt? Whatever the amount of debt you now carry, it is both wise and prudent to reduce it. Think of debt as analogous to unwanted fat; too much fat limits your physical options. People who are grossly overweight put undue stress on their skeletal system, look unattractive, can't bend over and touch their toes, and can't do much in the way of physical activity such as vigorous exercise or participate in sports. Likewise, people who are drowning in debt have much economic fallout to deal with: they tend to worry; they can't pay their bills; they can't take a well-earned vacation because they can't afford to purchase the things that provide such a vacation, their credit rating often suffers. Debt paints you in a corner.
- Most people have a perception of reality that is deeply flawed. (This is not a criticism so much as a description.) By that I mean most of us have a deeply held perception, call it a paradigm or world-view, that life operates in a linear fashion. Far too many people perceive the life's rhythms as something akin to a series of straight lines that pulsate in a systematic, predictable, sequential stream. The reality is that the world is non-linear. Things may move for a time in a rain of normalcy, lulling us into trance-like assumption that we can count on the future to be a logical extension of the past, but then all of a sudden, there is a sharp discontinuity, a radical and abrupt departure from familiar shores.
- With job interviews, my advice for you is to bring with you Thank You cards, postage, and return address labels. For each person who interviewed you, write them a quick note, address it, put a stamp on it, put your return address label on it, and drop it in the mail immediately. Don't do anything else before you take care of that. Doing so will make a positive impression and give you an edge.
- There is a fairly simple way to avoid the anguish that comes with sudden unemployment: You adopt the mindset that you could lose your job at any time. And therefore you make seeking your next job an ongoing pursuit -- even if you love your current job. A smart approach would be to scour the web on a weekly basis for jobs that you are qualified for. Chances are reasonably good that new job openings in your field

will be posted on the internet every week. So submit your resume and cover letter. Then follow up by phone if possible.

- Imagine what could happen to you this year if you make the great internal decision to achieve certain things that you are passionate about? Imagine how your behaviors and your habits would shift if you truly decided - truly committed - to attaining something extraordinary? I'm not talking about hope, or aspirations, or wishes. I'm talking about making a decision.
- Goal setting is the method self-starters use to augment their lives. This cannot be overstated. Virtually all progress, with the exception of those rare "happy accidents," occur because someone set a goal. For examples of a grand magnitude, the putting a man on the moon was the result of a goal, as was the building of the great pyramids of Egypt, as was the erection of the Great Wall of China. Most people elected to high office (exceptions would include Gerald Ford, Harry Truman, and Theodore Roosevelt who attained the presidency through circumstances beyond their control) do so as the result of a goal. And most of our accomplishments in life, be they mundane or stellar, are also the result of a goal.
- A mission could be thought of as the purpose of an enterprise, a team, or an individual. A mission is what an organization or person stands to accomplish. A vision, by contrast, is a desired future state. A vision is more of a condition one hopes to bring about in the future. If a mission is akin to a journey, a vision is more along the lines of a destination. If a mission is more of a process, a vision is a result - a desired result.
- You do not necessarily need to have a direct relationship with every person whom you find nurturing or empowering. Sometimes it is enough just to be exposed to their influence from afar.
- In an economic sense, most of us behave irrationally. To clarify: most of us allow our spending to go up as our income goes up, thus maintaining the same level of money earmarked for savings or investment that we did when we were poorer - which is often little or nothing.

- Find a way to consistently build your database with quality individuals. Make it a life-long endeavor. You won't be sorry.
- It's never been easier to get ahead of the pack than it is today. One reason I say that (and there are many) is due to an addiction that so many of your peers have. The addiction to which I refer is not drugs, gambling, or pornography - although admittedly, those addictions are wreaking havoc on society. Instead, the addiction to which I refer involves gadgets such as mobile phones, tablets, portable gaming devices, and the like. It seems that many people are simply hooked on them. And as a result, far too many people are squandering time (their most precious resource) drowning in irrelevancies.
- Make job hunting a regular process you engage in, no matter how much you love your current job.
- Networking is about building relationships. It's about getting out there and developing connections with other people. I am amazed at the quality of the relationships I have at this time, and I feel very lucky. But I am also keenly aware of the fact that there are many men and women out there whom I have never developed solid relationships with - and even more I don't even know at this time. I have no way of knowing what sort of alliances might or will take place in the future, but it's very important that I not be a recluse. I need to meet people constantly and be prepared to help and serve them, just as I hope they will be there for me when the time comes. We might need each other for information, expertise, perspective, friendship, introductions to others, advice, or to form a professional alliance and do some meaningful work together that is profitable for all.

## The Elephant in the Room A Retrospective

- I want to make it clear that I am not happy when anyone uses demeaning language to insult or offend anyone. I consider language a gift from God and I want people to use it in its elevated forms, not its lowest forms. Further, I expect people to treat each other with decency, graciousness, and dignity.

Having said that, it seems to me that the gay rights constituency has scored a major victory for their cause by seeing Kobe Bryant fined a six-figure amount for uttering that one word [the word *faggot*] at a referee. It is especially telling considering that Kobe Bryant is not anti-gay in any meaningful sense, and the referee involved is not gay either. This was clearly a case, as Kobe himself has said, of an angry outburst in the heat of the moment, and not something that was directed at the gay community. However, that makes no difference to the gay rights activists who contacted the NBA prior to their ruling against Kobe.

- An inability to control one's impulses can lead to disastrous consequences.
- Most readers are probably aware that the label "conservative" is usually associated with the Right, and the label "liberal" is usually associated with the Left. Thus, the notion of a conservative world-view suggests values and approaches that bring to mind words such as cautious, maintenance, tradition, standards, and continuity. The notion of a liberal world-view suggests values and approaches that bring to mind words such as abundance, new, exploration, tolerance, and change.
- Descriptive refers to merely describing what is happening. It points things out, tells it like it is, and articulates what is going on without putting a value judgment on it. Prescriptive refers to advocating for a point of view, telling how things should be, not are.
- The current occupant of the White House seems to see American exceptionalism as neither noteworthy nor praiseworthy, stating "I believe in American exceptionalism, just as I suspect that . . . the Greeks believe in Greek exceptionalism." Greek exceptionalism? Without meaning to impugn the Greek people, isn't Greece so badly mismanaged that, as I write, it is imploding economically? What, I wonder, has modern-day Greece done or produced that could be called exceptional? I suspect our president truly sees all countries as possessing exceptionalism - which is another way of saying that no country, not even the United States, possesses exceptionalism.

- San Francisco has outdone itself once again. After striving to legally ban circumcision (but not abortion, suggesting that the foreskin is seen as of more worth than the unborn), they are now striving to make the abnormal normal. A rally dubbed "Nude is not Lewd" was held the other day in San Francisco at the Castro and 17th Street Plaza. Roughly 50 naked persons, almost all of them gay men, showed up and strutted their stuff for all to see, including children. I have just one question: Of the nudists, how many of them do you think vote Republican? My point should be obvious: Leftist religiosity leads to many foolish things, and this is one of them.
- The basic premise of this group is that gender is fluid, and that if you are a male, but you wake up one morning imagining that you "feel" like a female, then you are a female. Likewise, a young lady who wakes up feeling like a boy, is a boy. Gender is, to such people, based on your mood and your inclinations, and not something that nature bestowed on you at birth. And whereas most of us strive to resolve our moments of confusion with clarity and resolution, the people that advocate for such movements actually revel in confusion and have no desires to escape from the psychological limbo that permeates their minds.
- We should not be surprised when individual stupidity surfaces. But when onlookers attempt to paint it as acceptable and normal and justifiable, we should be outraged.
- Not everyone who is a Leftist is an atheist. And not everyone who is a conservative (i.e., Right of center politically) is a believer in God. Yet atheists who are also conservative are an anomaly. Thus, it is safe to say that the typical atheist is, to whatever degree he or she is in possession of a coherent political philosophy, invariably a Leftist.
- One of the more Left-leaning members of the Supreme Court would be Ruth Bader Ginsburg, a Clinton-appointee who has been on the court since 1993. Just over three years ago, while advising the new but fledgling government of Egypt about constitutional models to consider, Ginsberg, who took an oath to uphold and defend the U.S. Constitution, said the following to the Egyptian officials who were hosting her: "I would not look to the U.S. Constitution if I were drafting a constitution in the year 2012."



- Boxer Manny Pacquiao, considered by many to be not only a decent human being, but the best pound-for-pound boxer on the planet, was interviewed by The National Examiner. When asked for his views on President Obama's recent endorsement of same-sex marriage, Pacquiao stated, in line with his Roman Catholic religious beliefs, that he does not agree with the President on this matter. And all hell broke loose. The gay activist group Gay Marriage USA started a petition to have Nike drop their sponsorship of Pacquiao, and management from a popular Los Angeles shopping center, The Grove, publicly stated that Mr. Pacquiao is now banned from setting foot on their property with this tweet: "Boxer Manny Pacquiao is not welcome @TheGroveLA. @TheGroveLA is a gathering place for all Angelenos, not a place for intolerance." I wonder if the management of The Grove is cognizant of the colossal irony in their statement - taking a position of intolerance all the while claiming they stand for tolerance.
- Which political party is the beneficiary of such campaign expenditures by the California Teachers Association? The Democrats. The union has become the biggest single donor to the California Democratic Party. But the Republican Party wasn't left out entirely. From 2003 to 2012, the CTA contributed an average of about \$800 each year to Republican causes. By contrast, the CTA contributed about \$101 million to Democrats during that same ten year time frame. But at least Republicans got something -- something like a waitress receiving a tip of 8 pennies.
- America is an idea. The gist of the idea consists of the following 3 notions: America is about freedom. America is about God. America is about nationalism. Always remember: America is not merely another country. America is an idea -- an idea that must be preserved.
- It goes without saying that if I had ever said to my father some of the things I hear other teenagers these days say to their parents, I wouldn't be alive to write this article. It seems to me that a certain coarsening has taken place in the rising generation, and this coarsening has been aided and abetted by an adult permissiveness that seems to be more interested in showing compassion and understanding



than in maintaining standards of decency. I think society is going to end up paying a heavy price for such miscalculation.

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

## From Ara's Journal

### A Retrospective

- Life has its challenges. While there are many aspects of life that are splendid and wonderful, there is clearly much that is lamentable and sad. It's tough out there. We need to remember that we are all in this together. The Protestant aphorism comes to mind: "There, but for the grace of God, go I."
- I also fear that feelings for revenge and evening the score preoccupy many of us far too often, which not only distracts us from being productive, but somehow is a blight on our own soul.
- The conflict between theists (i.e., believers) and atheists is an interesting construct. If atheists turn out to be correct that there is no existence after death, they will not be in a position to gloat about it. In fact, they will never know that they were right all along. Whereas if theists turn out to be correct that there is a God and life after death, they could say "I told you so" but probably would not do so. There would be no need. The new realities in the next life, with its norms, structures, and culture, would hopefully obliterate any tendencies for high-mindedness, as we explore our new home (or re-explore our old) with unabashed wonder, astonishment, and profound gratitude.
- It seems to me that some atheists, blinded by their animosity towards anything that suggests holiness, actually expect believers in God to be able to conduct such experiments on a Being that is said to have created them. I sense that such atheists have, in their frothy rage, lapsed in their comprehension of what God is.



- My greatest worry with respect to the Boiled Frog Syndrome is with respect to the spiritual dimension of one's life. When our very conscience is compromised, and we lose our sense of the moral, nothing else seems to matter. Our ability to be good and do good is lost and we become barbaric, selfish, and sometimes downright evil. I think it is very important that above all else, we protect and nurture the core of who and what we are. Prayer, apologizing, forgiving, anonymous service, sacrificing, these seem to be helpful antidotes to the Boiled Frog Syndrome in the spiritual realm.
- I wonder if we, as Americans, have really learned much from 9/11. I wonder this because it seems that many people within American culture have some strange fear of articulating who it was that attacked us. Many - especially in the news media - seem unable to say that Muslim extremists, or Islamic radicals are the ones that attacked us on 9/11. I do not pretend to understand why there is this fear or unwillingness to state the blatantly obvious: these people were Muslims. That does not in any way denigrate all Muslims. But it does justifiably denigrate certain factions within Islam. And we do a grave injustice to those who perished when we attempt to remain politically correct and refuse to identify the killers for who they are.
- I just finished reading a fascinating account of the Lewis & Clark expedition of the early 19th century. Meriweather Lewis returned to civilization after being gone almost 3 years and soon became one of the most notable men in American society, ranking with such luminaries as his mentor, President Thomas Jefferson. Yet he allowed all the balls and the parties and the toasts in his honor to go to his head, resulting in his turning to alcohol and drugs, which in turn resulted in a rash of poor decisions, compromised health, and an inability to take the necessary actions to get his journals published. He committed suicide three years after the Lewis & Clark expedition ended. I am struck by the fact that whatever our success in this life, we can never afford to rest on our laurels. It ain't over till it's over. . .
- I sometimes wonder whether "the divine" leaves clues. If there is such a thing as God (and I am quite convinced there is) would He leave clues? And, more

importantly, would we detect such clues?

- Drugs remain one of the few things in life that I am content to never learn to avoid due to bad first-hand experience with it. I've seen enough - second-hand - of what it consistently does to others to know not to go anywhere near it. Ignorance in this case is indeed bliss.
- What area in my life am I absolutely certain about that I may, in fact, be utterly mistaken about? Worth reflecting on.
- I wonder what it is about an atheist that maintains thechutzpah to deny the existence of God. Many an atheist will decry the alleged arrogance of the theist for claiming to affirm the belief in a higher power that the atheist insists is a myth. How is it the atheist, aware of the haughty conceits of the theist, is blind to his own haughty conceits? Even more importantly, what is it that drives the atheist to embrace a world-view of faith in faithlessness? Why default to that bleak paradigm? Aside from the obvious overdose of hubris employed by the cocksure atheist, I wonder why they embrace an assumption of a godless universe. . . Could it be that they are of a character that is more comfortable, more "at home," in such a universe? Is it somehow important to their psyche to live their lives in a world where the operating principle is godlessness, purposelessness, and moral relativity (i.e., anything goes)? Is the atheist truly operating from a deep belief that there is no evidence for God, or, rather, is it possibly the case that the atheist simply has a predisposition to hate holy things and love un-holy things, and such loyalties cause them to parade around in the guise of a "reasoned, progressive, scientific, rational" child of the enlightenment? Some enlightenment!
- Music has the power to raise - and unfortunately the power to raze. I once heard Dennis Prager, a man whose love of music rivals my own, once ask sardonically, "What must hell be like? Are the people who go there forced to listen to rap music?" Certainly rap music - if it can really be called music - doesn't represent the art's strongest showing. The same could be said of much of that form of rock and roll music known as heavy metal. While rap and heavy metal may be among the most destructive manifestations of this amazing art form, there are

plenty of other samples out there in all genres that are, shall we say, less than impressive.

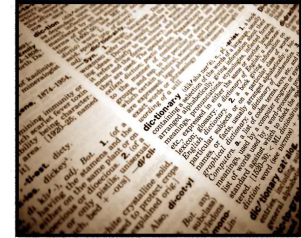
- I sense that to the degree that I maintain poise and perspective, I can lend strength and grace to those whom I love and grieve with. Sometimes I sense they need advice and direction. More often they just need to know I'm there and willing to simply listen. On some rare occasions they need their space to sort things out without either my input or my presence.
- For quite some time now, I have noticed a troubling trend. It seems that whenever we are in an election year - and often when we are not in an election year - people all over the country seem to be obsessed with the economy, as if it is the economy that is not only the most important issue that has our attention, but it is the only issue that has our attention.
- Whatever we humans believe about unjust human suffering, our thoughts, assumptions, biases, and mental models are as primitive ramblings when compared to the wider, deeper, more evolved perceptions of a divine Being.
- The sobering reality about life is impending death. Death is like the big rubber ball in dodge ball. Every day we wake up to find that there are people who are no longer part of this world - they got tagged. They're out. And one day it will be our turn. Since death is inevitable, it only makes sense to live life very deliberately, to strive to live well, and to take life seriously. It seems to me that there is wisdom in living life fully, and not to coast through life. Thoreau had it right when he said, "If one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours."
- There is micro-evil, and there is macro-evil. Micro-evil occurs when twisted degenerates such as Luka Magnotta do their thing. Macro-evil occurs when society becomes so corrupt that it loses its capacity to be shocked by micro-evil - when societies' values start to shift slightly, and become more tolerant of such depravity. I am far more concerned with macro-evil than with micro-evil.
- Here is the lesson of unforgiveness: the offended

party appears small and inhumane. There is an element of inflexibility and inadaptability in the person who cannot forgive. The unforgiving seem to paint themselves in a corner.

## The World of Words

### Exigencies

#### Building Your Power of Expression



**Exigencies**, n., pl.

**Pronunciation:** 'eksijənsēs

**Meaning:** Things that are urgent or in demand could be said to be exigencies. They are time-sensitive. They are needed ASAP.

#### Usage:

- *Women worked long hours when the exigencies of the family economy demanded it.*
- *He put financial exigencies before his personal sentiments.*
- *The exigencies involved here require sound legal counsel.*

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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)).

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