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Uncommon Sense

Providing Clarity, Promoting Intelligence

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Issue: # 103

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Greetings!

I don't know if it's me, but this issue of *Uncommon Sense* seems to focus on a variety of issues and stories that all have a sad or negative hue to them.

But that is part of life.

Life has its ups and life has its downs. While we shouldn't limit our outlook to the bleak or negative, we probably don't benefit from pretending it's not there, either.

Don't worry; brighter content is coming. Just like brighter days follow gloomy ones.

In the meantime, learn what you can about failure in business, and how to avoid it. I lead with a piece on that topic.

Also, I cover a strange story about a strange and troubled woman in the Elephant in the Room column. And I close with a heartbreaking recount of a recent tragic story that was in the news a few weeks ago, whose subject still haunts me to this day. That's life.

OK, let's get started.

Ara Norwood



[Self-Development](#)

How To Fail Quickly

One of the more interesting shows on television presently is Shark Tank. The show is wonderful in allowing its audience to see a whole slew of new product or service ideas by a wide array of entrepreneurs, and how they interface with some extraordinarily successful business

people known as the Sharks - Mark Cuban, Barbara Corcoran, Kevin O'Leary, Lori Greiner, Daymond John, and Robert Herjavec. It's



particularly enjoyable when more than one "Shark" decides they want to get involved with the business being presented, and the bidding wars begin.

Recently, [the 100th episode](#) of this television program aired, and I happened to see a good portion of it. One of the contestants on the show was an entrepreneur named John D. Smith who had build a business called Storm Stoppers. His company sells protective panels to cover windows of homes during an impending hurricane. The panels were made of a material that was said to be much stronger than the usual ply wood commonly used to board up windows during a storm, and was easy to install and remove, as well as was more aesthetically pleasing to the eye. It does cost about five times as much as ply wood.

At one point in the show, John D. Smith clumsily picked up a folding table from behind the set, and managed to carry it out to the front. The table contained samples of his product. I mention this seemingly innocuous detail for reasons that will become clear momentarily.

While Storm Stoppers had grown over a ten-year period to command as much as \$1.6 Million in annual product sales, the most recent year only mustered \$200,000 in sales - a significant slump. During a tense back-and-forth with Kevin O'Leary, Mr. Smith apparently got flummoxed at Mr. O'Leary's constant interruptions to a main point the entrepreneur was trying to make, and he said to Kevin O'Leary, "Well, unless you're a mind reader, let me tell you."

That killed it.

All five sharks expressed disinterest in pursuing any sort of business relationship with John D. Smith. Mark Cuban, in declaring his own reasons for not moving forward, said, "John, you're obviously an expert in residential hurricane safety and protection. But, your interpersonal skills, and your sales skills, are awful. If you challenge Kevin when basically your business life is on the line, and you're asking him if he's a mind-reader, I can only imagine when you get flustered in a situation where you're trying to sell a home owner or a builder. I don't trust you in terms of your sales ability, and for those reasons, I'm out."

John D. Smith walked away with nothing. In fact, he walked away with less than nothing. Once outside the main set, a producer with camera crew usually interviews the entrepreneurs briefly. The interviewer must have asked him what he learned from his experience with the sharks. John D. Smith said the following: "If I had one thing to do over again, I would have left the table out."

Shocking!

One of two things come to mind: either John D. Smith is utterly and completely clueless about what is going on around him, and has a serious learning disability, or he simply is unwilling to face his own failures and learn from them. Sometimes the truth is, indeed, painful, but unless we face our own flaws and resolve to never repeat them, we are never going to evolve as people.

So ask yourself some questions:

- Am I even willing to have the courage to examine my own flaws, face up to them, and correct them?
- Am I even aware of my flaws?
- Can I set up a feedback mechanism to get candid reviews and critique of my work, my personality, my approach, my mannerisms, etc., from trusted advisors?

If you do these things, you will bend the odds in your favor to be successful.

So what are you waiting for?

The Elephant in the Room

The Source of Misery

A recent story came out of Florida about a woman who was arrested for violating parole. I don't know the details of her past legal battles, nor am I all that interested in them.

But there are some things about her story that do interest me a bit.

This woman, whose name is Nickole Dykema, is a case study in misery. One can tell by looking at her face in the

photo to the right, which many mistook for a man, not a woman. The face betrays a tortured existence. And the woman is indeed unstable and probably mentally ill. How else to explain her obsession with bladed instruments? She lives in a trailer park, yet her little



enclave of a home had more than 3,500 knives, swords, or machetes covering her walls.

The woman also had pentagrams on her walls (a symbol sometimes used by Satanists) and fake body parts from a Halloween novelty shop, suggesting an obsession with dismemberment. She had also recently, for no apparent reason, used a bladed instrument to slash the screens of a nearby neighbor. The act was captured on surveillance video. Further, neighbors complained of regular bellowing and screeching coming from her trailer, and frequent loud pounding on the walls from inside her trailer.

I do not pretend to have enough training or data to make a sound diagnosis of this woman or her issues. But it is difficult to avoid the obvious: there is a clear and

unmistakable correlation between a fascination with evil and the personal misery that such fascination begets. Take a close and careful look at her face, and you know all you need to know about this pitiful soul. She is tortured, miserable, and filled with anxiety. She is unfeminine, and possessed of fantasies of mayhem, and thus, she suffers by virtue of the choices she makes daily - choices that have locked her into a cycle of degeneracy and coarsened madness.

I wonder how many times she heard messages that mocked traditional religious values, messages which failed to drive her towards the secular (the intended outcome for Leftists), but to, instead, overshoot the secular and embrace a dark counterfeit of Judeo-Christian religious norms.

Perhaps she will receive, in jail, some measure of therapy and rehabilitation. One can only hope.

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

Shameless Plug

New Speech on the Founding Fathers to Debut This Month

After several years of delivering speeches on an overview of the Founding Fathers, I am pleased to announce that Six Great Men, Part 2, my latest presentation on the lives of the Founding Fathers, is being delivered for the first time on September 22nd in Burbank, California.



This deeper dive into to the lives of Franklin, Washington, Adams, Jefferson, Madison, and Hamilton will take a look at their relationship with their parents, their intellectual accomplishments, and their role and outlook with respect to slavery.

This is a presentation that is meant to inspire, and to instill deep respect in men who, despite their flaws, produced a great nation.

Reach out to me if your organization could benefit from a shot of patriotism and leadership.

From Ara's Journal Remembering Aylan Kurdi

To this day I am haunted by the image.

A 3-year-old Syrian boy, innocent, inquisitive, and wonderful.

The first photos I saw of him a few weeks ago showed him in what appeared to be a tent-like structure. His innocent face looked. . . surprised. His hands were pressing against the window-like plastic of the front of this tent. A glance at the headline indicated a tragedy had taken place. The boy had drowned with other members of his family who were trying to escape from Syria.



I didn't want to know about it. I wasn't sure if the photo was showing him in the act of drowning, as if the tent itself was underwater and people simply couldn't get to him on time, yet someone snapped a clear photo with an underwater camera. Again, I didn't want to know. It was too painful a story to face. So I looked away.

When the story came on the radio in my car while driving, I shut off the radio. I simply did not want to know. As I am raising a grandson who is now two, I felt the two children looked somewhat alike, and I did not want to imagine what it might be like to experience the loss of my grandson, who is such an integral part of my life, and who brings me unspeakable joy.

But while I tried to ignore the story, something was planted in my heart that would not allow me to continue the masquerade of ignorance. Something prompted me to face up to the story, and to seek out its details.

So I went online and tried to find that photo of the boy in the tent. Curiously, I could not find it. It had been very visible online just a few days earlier, and now it had vanished, leading me to believe that my earlier supposition that perhaps it was a photo of an actual drowning taking place might have some merit. I thought, perhaps those

who monitor what is posted on the internet decided that such a tragic photo was beyond the pale.

But while the photo was gone, the story itself was still there. And other photos, more horrific, were in its place.

I saw the dead body of the boy lying face down in the sand on the seashore, his lifeless head pointed in the direction of the ocean, slightly facing left, with the tide washing up to the little face, and the arms straight back towards to shore, palms up. That corpse had once been a happy child. And now that life was extinguished.

I broke down and began to weep, wondering why God would allow such a thing, forgetting that, for whatever reason, God allows lots of things - both beautiful and horrific.

I don't usually add photos to this particular column (other than the standard photo of the journal) and I won't add the photo of the now deceased little boy on this occasion. It is simply too sad to expose my readership to it. But I will say that the boy had a name, and it was Aylan Kurdi. The name, at least in Turkish, refers to an open field or range. While that little soul is now truly free in the open heavens, enjoying new vistas we can scarcely comprehend, we who remain here in mortality mourn at the loss.

And hopefully are kinder and more gracious to one another.

I needed to be exposed to a story I initially chose to avoid. I needed the feeling of heartbreak to make me more humane.

Sad that it takes a tragedy to soften the human spirit.

I will never forget the story of Aylan Kurdi.

The World of Words

Canard

Building Your Power of Expression

Canard, n

Pronunciation: kə'när(d)



Meaning: A canard is an unfounded rumor or story.

Usage:

- *He spends too much time promulgating that old canard that LA is a cultural wasteland.*
- *That old canard that "confession is good for the soul" usually only seems to work for the person confessing.*
- *As for the character issue, it strikes me as a convenient canard to distract attention from the fact that our real differences run the gamut from A to Z.*

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
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