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Uncommon Sense

Providing Clarity, Promoting Intelligence

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Issue: # 105

October 12, 2015

Greetings!

Just got back from a road trip to Utah. Great times! My wonderful nephew got married to a classy young lady, I got to visit with brilliant minds (Louis Midgley and Jack Welch) and I added to my ever-growing library with some new additions.



I tackle a provocative question in the **Ara's Journal** column about whether the world is getting better.

What are your thoughts? I invite you to weigh in. Is the world getting better? Worse? About the same? And what is the biggest problem facing our world today?

I also highlight some trendy language used by those who would harm America, skewering them in the process. Have fun reading the **Elephant in the Room** column.

But I lead off with a profile in greatness with a piece titled "Giants that Walk Among Us." This is a continuation of a trend I launched back in Issue #24 when I profiled the illustrious Keri Tombazian, a woman of profound depth, poise, and grace. This time, I hone in on an unexpected source, for those of you that imagine that business or politics are my main gig. They are not.

There are a few more odds and ends in this issue, which I thoroughly relished writing for you.

OK, let's get started.

Self-Development

Giants Who Walk Among Us: John McLaughlin

Business people (or anyone in any field who wishes to do great things) can stand to learn from the best in the world when it comes to other fields that are completely unrelated to their own. This is because success follows certain patterns in all walks of life.

Let me introduce you to [John McLaughlin](#), the pioneering jazz guitarist. McLaughlin, now 73, began his career as a professional musician when he was about 21. Now,

more than
40
commercially
recorded
albums
later, he
stands atop
of a jazz
guitar



hierarchy that includes luminaries such as Barney Kessel, Joe Pass, Pat Metheny, Larry Coryell, Joe Satriani, and Al Di Meola. Yet, all of them view McLaughlin as an artist in a class all his own. And they are right. But why?

Three things stand out to me:

- McLaughlin has produced an enormous body of work. The sheer volume of his output is staggering! As mentioned above, his first album, *Extrapolation*, came out when he was 28 years of age. His 41st album, *Black Light*, is hot off the press as of last month. And he shows no signs of running out of energy or creative material. He has also appeared on roughly 40 other albums supporting the work of a wide variety of artists.
- McLaughlin's musicianship as a guitarist truly personifies what it means to be a virtuoso. His speed is blinding, his runs and riffs are impossibly complex, the modes and meters he has played and

composed in
are atypical and
daunting for
any musician to
emulate. As a
university-
educated
musician, I find
myself simply
baffled as I
listen to the
arrangements
he has
produced over
the past
decade. While



there were times in my musical prime that I would have (and did) attempt to perform some McLaughlin compositions, his more recent music is so completely beyond my comprehension that it would never occur to me to even attempt to learn the stuff. He's that advanced. His secret: from a technique standpoint, he simply figures out what he is incapable of doing and then proceeds to work on it until it becomes natural to him.

- Finally, McLaughlin is constantly exploring and stretching the boundaries of musical strictures. He is in tune (no pun intended) with the reality that music, as an art form, is vast, and that it would take several lifetimes to master even 15% of all the possible musical styles or genres that are out there. John McLaughlin has, through his various ensembles (including the Mahavishnu Orchestra, Shakti, The One Truth Band, the Guitar Trio, and the 4th Dimension) mastered jazz, fusion, Indian classical music, acoustical virtuoso guitar styles, and some genres that defy description.

All of this contributes to why I see McLaughlin as not only my favorite guitarist, but also my favorite musician, bar none.

We can learn from John McLaughlin. Just as he has produced a larger-than-normal body of work, so can we. We can simply decide we are going to crank out a lot of work throughout our life, regardless of our field. This is a decision we can make, and once we make it, we can (and

should) structure our lives in such a way so as to crank out results on a regular basis, week after week, month after month, year after year, decade after decade.



Likewise, we can refine our skills over time. We can invest in self-improvement, and hone our craft, perfecting what it is we do. We can continually raise the bar and deliberately get better at what we do.

And finally, we can make the firm decision to not merely do what we've always done, but rather, to explore new methods, new avenues, and new innovations. We can look into redefining ourselves when appropriate, and get out of the ruts we are in, bringing whole new skills, approaches, and contributions to the table.

Learn these three lessons from John McLaughlin as I have, and there is no doubt that your work life will be eventful, productive, and rewarding.

The Elephant in the Room

Leftist Code Language: *Inclusion*

Various factions within society have favorite words or phrases that they draw upon frequently. For those who favor abortion on demand, the phrase "a woman's right to choose" is bandied about (without ever completing the sentence which would define what it is that's being chosen, I should add.) For presidential candidates who wish to gain their party's nomination, the word "I" comes up frequently, followed by a litany of accomplishments that the person supposedly brought about while in office as governor or senator or whatever. For rap "artists," expletives seem to be the limit of their power of expression. [The 1.6%](#) of the population who's sexual proclivities embrace same-sex attraction find great solace in use of the word "pride." And for teenagers, I often hear the word "convo" as code language for "conversation," or "peeps" which is code language for "people" (usually meaning their Facebook contacts.)

The radical Left (i.e., virtually all college professors and administrators, just about everyone at the New York Times, any activist, and almost every single person who runs a union) wish to fundamentally transform the United States of America into a Socialist European welfare state. They have their favorite slogans as well. They belch them out in knee-jerk fashion without much thought, as their cognitive processes are pretty much in hibernation or on automatic pilot.

I wish to highlight some of these trite expressions that come from the Left because I think they are instructive. They shed light on a peculiar impulse and also expose the unwanted consequences of such impulses when they do become policy.

Here's one that is currently in vogue: the word is *inclusive*.

The Left uses this word a lot. They use it to justify normalizing the abnormal, and they also use it to bludgeon decency, morality, and traditional religion. Further, they use it to kill off patriotism and to weaken a strong, nationalistic republic. Some of them may not be conscious of such outcomes and are merely automatons, mouthing phraseology that sounds palatable, but hasn't been thought through. Others, however, hold insidious agendas close to their vest and seek to destroy that which the Founders envisioned. They are enemies of the State and should be called out and confronted when they rear their ugly heads.

But there is another issue I have with the Leftist slogan - it is both dishonest and philosophically impossible to adhere to. In other words, when Leftists say they do what they do for purposes of inclusion, they are either lying through their teeth, or are just too foolish to see that their utopian paradigm is an illusion that cannot be realized.

One recent manifestation of this Leftist toxicity took place at a high school in Jackson Hole, Wyoming of all places. On September 30th, as part of their Homecoming festivities, Jackson Hole High School administrators decided to [cancel their American Pride Day](#), leaving Toga Day and Lumberjack Day intact. On each day students would be encouraged to wear clothing representative of the celebration in question: togas on Toga Day, flannel on Lumberjack Day, and American Flags or other patriotic-themed clothing on American Pride Day.

And why was it cancelled? Let's listen to the explanation by Assistant Principal Mike Hansen: Some students may not feel American and thus, may feel "targeted and singled out by this day. Maybe they moved here last week. Maybe they moved here last month. We're trying to balance many different things here. We're trying to be inclusive and safe, [and] make everyone feel welcome."

Hey, Mike Hanson: do you think the American students at your school who wanted to celebrate American Pride Day now feel they are a part of your inclusive agenda? Hmm?

I wonder, . . . if Mike Hanson ever went to visit Japan, would he demand that they take down any and all Japanese flags so that he could feel a sense of inclusiveness? If he's consistent, that is exactly what he would demand. And the rest of us would be amused at his narcissism. In such a scenario, the Japanese people, to use Mike Hanson's mental model, should walk on eggshells and be somewhat tepid and uncomfortable with their national identity as long as a Leftist like him is on the scene. Foolish!

I am proud of the many Jackson Hole High School students who defied orders (as in the example of the photo to the right) and wore patriotic attire on the day of the cancelled event. They

showed much more common (or un-common) sense than did Mike Hanson or the rest of the administration. Also, a poll asking if respondents agreed with school administration officials for their decision to



cancel American Pride Day was taken. 95% disagreed while only 3% agreed (with 1% indicating they were "Not Sure.")

Leftism is not compatible with American values.

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

Shameless Plug Interview Guide To Debut

After many months of research and writing and testing, I have finally completed work on a new eBook: *Your Interview Roadmap*. At over 12,000 words and with six appendices, this guide book will open your eyes to what really goes on in the world of interviewing from both sides of the desk, and will prepare job seekers to hit it out of the park 80% of the time. (OK, more like 90%, but I prefer to be understated.)

While the content is complete, the cover is being designed and it should be on my website for sale within two weeks.



Look for details of this amazing

product in the next issue of *Uncommon Sense*!

From Ara's Journal Is the World Getting Better or Worse?

Some months back I was involved in a discussion that a colleague and friend of mine, JG, launched on his Facebook page.

He had suggested that the biggest problem in the world today is a growing disparity between the rich and the poor. I dissented, and proffered the idea that it was actually the growing disparity between good and evil

that was the biggest problem in the world today. Further, I suggested that most people in the "good" camp simply lack the courage to confront evil, thus allowing it to continue unabated.



My colleague/friend replied with the following thought:

I disagree that the disparity of good and evil is a growing problem. I think the world is getting better. I think that slavery is less acceptable and pervasive than probably all other times of our planet's history. Women's rights are better than ever. Racism (while still a problem) is lower than ever. People have more global concern than ever before. The internet (for all its flaws) has been a net positive and created so many causes to improve the world. While I wish it were better, we have more diversity in board rooms than ever before. The world is getting better by most measures of good and evil.

This was a highly instructive expression. In fact, the ideas put forth in JG's posting represent a textbook perfect example of a certain brand of thinking. Allow me to deconstruct his points.

JG outlined what he believes are the great evils or issues in the world and feels all of them are actually improving. He cited the following five issues:

- Slavery
- Women's Rights
- Racism
- Global Concern and Improving the World
- Diversity

In his mind, slavery is a great evil (and he is correct in that) but that such slavery is less prevalent than at any other time in history. Let's see if that is correct:

According to the [Borgen Project](#) (a non-profit group that addresses poverty and hunger), an estimated 29.8 million people still live in slavery today (with 55% of them being women or girls.) 26% of today's slaves are children. It is estimated that there are some 60,000 slaves here in the United States right now. 14 million slaves are living in India right now. Human trafficking is still rather prevalent, even though some observers believe the numbers are [overstated](#).

But the ultra-liberal New York Times, who shares JG's values, insists that slavery today stands at 27 Million, two million more than in 1860.

In his mind, women's rights is also a huge issue, and he opines that women today have greater rights than ever

before. To which I reply: Well, that depends on where we have directed our focus. In the United States, I would concur. But in Muslim countries, where honor killings are the norm, and where female rape victims can be killed for having been raped, . . . can anyone claim with a straight face that "You've come a long way, baby?"

Further, he believes that Racism is at an all time low. While that is certainly true in the United States, there are parts of the world that are still very much steeped in the blight of racism. What about the Islamic world targeting Israel and truly desiring to obliterate the nation and its people?

And what about these problems:

- Islamic Terrorism.
- Spring Break rapes and murders.
- Continued lack of ethics in business and commerce.
- The national debt (President Obama ran up the debt in 24 months more than all prior US President's combined.)
- What about our nation's obsession on the economy at the expense of everything else?
- Has rap "music" helped our culture evolve or decline?
- The drought in California brought on by Leftist policies.
- Leftist attacks on the Boy Scouts that will continue unabated, even after that organization has allowed both gay scouts and gay scout leaders.
- Fewer Marriages; disintegration of the family; greater numbers of divorces.
- Crime rates in general?
- The drug culture (with heroin addition reaching epidemic proportions in many places.)
- Fewer attending Church.
- Fewer doing volunteer work (Rotary club membership is at an all-time low.)
- What about the skyrocketing crime of identify theft?
- What about the violent crime of rape?
- What about the number of burglaries?
- What about violent crime in general, both domestically and world-wide?
- What about child abuse?
- What about police shootings?
- What about mass shootings?
- What about cyber crimes?

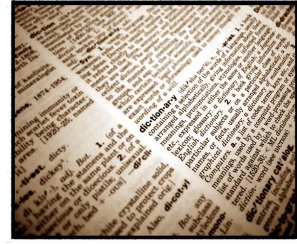
All of these things cause me to suspect the world is no way getting better. . .

Buffeted

Building Your Power of Expression

Buffeted, v, pt

Pronunciation: 'bəfit(ed)



Meaning: To buffet something is to strike repeatedly and violently. To batter or knock something (or someone) off its course; or to otherwise afflict or harm something (or someone) repeatedly, mercilessly, and over a long period of time.

Usage:

- *Starting in late 2008, the entire U.S. economy was buffeted by a very predicable collapse of the housing market.*
- *I couldn't even latch my life vest, I was so violently buffeted from side to side by the most savage waves I have ever encountered.*
- *Latter-day scripture refers to something called "the buffetings of Satan" (D&C 132:26); I now believe I have been thus buffeted.*

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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